New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1945

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Theatre Critics' Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers

NEW YORK SUN
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

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"Alice in Arms"

Comedy by L. and M. Bush-Fekete and Sidney Sheldon; staging by Jack Daniels; setting designed and lighted by Frederick Fox; presented by Edward Choate and Marie Louise Elkins at the National Theater, Wednesday, January 31, 1945.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
February 1, 1945

A Dull Trifle About a WAC

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

THOUGH no playwright has come seriously to grips with that pressing problem, the return of the soldier to civilian life, it is certainly getting quite a whirl in comedy form. First there were several plays about regulation returnees; then came a 15-year-old specimen in *Snafu;* and now, in *Alice in Arms,* we have a mustered-out WAC. They'll soon be turning in desperation to a demobilized cavalry horse.

Alice in Arms is a harmless but halting work that gets nowhere partly from resembling too many previous plays, and even more from having very little on the ball. Whatever novelty lay in bringing back a lady warrior instead of a man has not been seized on with any skill. The home life (garrulous mother, energetic kid brother, sourpuss uncle) that Alice returns to is so typical of comedy as to be tiresome. For plot, there is a pre-Euclidian triangle (I feel sure it was in vogue with yarn-spinners after the Trojan war) involving the impetuous soldier Alice fell in love with under fire, and the solid citizen she grew up with and always planned to marry. Believing that war is war and peace is peace, she plans to marry him still; but these days, on the stage as off, young men in uniform quite properly have their superior rights.

Though a machine-made affair at best, *Alice in Arms* has two or three lively interludes, particularly during the second act. But the first act is talky and slow, the last act lame and protracted. Nor is Mr. Daniels' staging of any great help. Peggy Conklin makes an animated Alice, and Kirk Douglas and Roger Clark are satisfactory suitors—with G. Albert Smith satisfactory too, as an older and less persistent one. Tom McElhany does a nice bit-job as a nosey mailman. Frederick Fox has designed a domestic set to outdo *The Voice of the Turtle's:* living-room, dining-room and *upstairs* bedroom. With the housing situation what it is, it seems a shame somebody can't live in it when it's not in use.

NEW YORK TIMES
February 1, 1945

Marrying Yum-Yum

By LEWIS NICHOLS

TO the National Theatre last evening the firm of Choate & Elkins brought "Alice in Arms"—and a plague on that house. The new comedy by L. & M. Bush-Fekete and Sidney Sheldon is another one about the returning soldier, and to it nothing new has been added save that the soldier is a WAC. Mechanically put together and with dialogue so wooden as to splinter, it defeats the usually charming talents of Peggy Conklin in the leading role, and ambles along as a sort of sophomoric grade-B show. Miss Conklin deserves better; as a WAC lieutenant, she should send such nonsense to the guardhouse.

The scheme of "Alice in Arms" starts with the return of Alice from France. A home-town engineer, to whom she once was engaged, hopes to marry her. But stay. In France she had spent a furlough in Paris with an Army sergeant and, drama plots being what they are, he isn't long in showing up at her home. A colonel, to whom she had been secretary, also arrives in Linwood, there apparently having been general leave from the Western Front. All three men wish to marry her, the thoughtful money last evening being on the sergeant. Ever been to Paris in the spring, the Paris of the little restaurants whose menus are in French, whose churches and streets are Parisian? The thoughtful money was safe.

Miss Conklin, as usual, is attractive and Kirk Douglas is fair enough as the noncom. Roger Clark is the local engineer, and since the script no doubt said "stuffy," that he is. G. Albert Smith is the colonel for only a minute or two and Florence Shirley is the Wac's mother. Frederick Fox has built a fancy double-deck setting for what is undoubtedly a below-deck play.

THE CAST

Mike	Johnnie Venn
Willis	Russell N. Morrison
Daisy	Florence Shirley
Alice	Peggy Conklin
Helen	Judith Abbott
Florence	Darthy Hinkley
Walter	Roger Clark
Collins	Tom McElhany
First Private	Jerry Vincent
Second Private	Richard Coogan
Steve	Kirk Douglas
Beeker	George Ives
Henry	Mickey Stewart
Colonel Benson	G. Albert Smith

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
February 1, 1945

A Soldier Once More Wins a Girl in 'Alice in Arms,' and That's All

By JOHN CHAPMAN

IF you should be contemplating taking an afternoon off to write a play on account of the money in it I can give you a plot for free. I'm pretty sure it's for free because it must be in the public domain by now. All you do is have a soldier beat a civilian out of a girl.

It's sure fire—if you happen to think of the right words to go along with the plot. Norman Krasna did very well with this plot in "Dear Ruth," just by filling in the spaces with jokes.

Last night, at the National Theatre, Ladislas Bush-Fekete, Mary Helen Fay Bush-Fekete and Sidney Sheldon (are you paying attention?) tried the plot again in a comedy titled "Alice in Arms." But instead of filling in the spaces with jokes they filled in with conversation, and that was a mistake.

Conversation doesn't make a play. If it did I know at least eight women who are greater than Eleanora Duse and Sarah Bernhardt put together. And talk is doubly undramatic on the stage—or in somebody's house—when it is about something that occurred somewhere else. You just don't give a damn what happened somewhere else, unless you happen to be the one talking.

The Normandy Campaign

In "Alice in Arms" Peggy Conklin is a WAC come back from the wars to her small Pennsylvania home town. She is resuming civilian life, and part of this resumption is marriage to a stuffed shirt. Along comes a soldier she fell in love with in the Normandy campaign—a nervy but charming fellow—and of course he gets her. There is a lot of talk about what they did in Normandy and how it was in Paris and so forth which they seem to enjoy—but I didn't because I wasn't there when it happened.

Ladislas Bush-Fekete, Mary Helen Fay Bush-Fekete and Sidney Sheldon have put in the usual small-town trappings—the boarder whom nobody wants around, the mother who is very motherish but a little dumb, the kid brother and all the neighbors.

Miss Conklin is, as always, a nice girl and an able little comedienne. Roger Clark manfully stands up to the role of the civilian stuffed shirt, and Kirk Douglas plays the conquering soldier with modest charm. Everybody, in fact, is quite pleasant, and there are a few honest laughs—but "Alice in Arms" is one of the mildest of plays.

There is a clever two-level setting by Frederick Fox. Jack Daniels directed.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
February 1, 1945

Wac's Bill of Wrongs

By OTIS L. GUERNSEY JR.

ACCORDING to the credits, it took three playwrights to dream up a new version of the old love triangle story in "Alice in Arms" at the National Theater. The comedy script is a collaboration of L. and M. Bush-Fekete and Sidney Sheldon, and it is all about a girl who can't make up her mind between two beaux. No matter that she happens to be a Wac returned from Normandy and that one of her loves is a soldier and the other a civilian; these are merely details to form the bare complications of a modern plot. "Alice in Arms" remains just another mild, shopworn little husband lottery with a few new jokes tossed in for good measure.

• • •

Peggy Conklin plays Alice, the Wac lieutenant who returns to her small native village of Linwood, Pa., after a couple of years at the front, and at first the play gives promise of inquiring how our gals will feel about home after a stretch in the Army. But the action soon dissolves into the common romantic denominator. A sergeant, with whom the Wac had a fling in Paris, shows up on leave, and from then on her civilian love, a socially prominent childhood sweetheart, has a fight on his hands for her affections. For the last two acts "Alice in Arms" wonders who will win between these two Titans, representing Security and Glamour. You haven't been seeing enough motion pictures lately if you don't know from the start who comes out on top in this common American folk drama.

• • •

The trio of playwrights have had better luck with characterization than with their story, and a group of competent actors have worked out a bright moment or two. Kirk Douglas builds up a share of sympathy as the sergeant who won't take a negative matrimonial answer from the Wac, and Roger Clark is equally believable as the civilian contender. Johnnie Venn as the girl's saucy kid brother and Florence Shirley as the scatter-brained mother of the house manage to build some laughs out of the script. Miss Conklin does not fare as well; being the Wac, she is trapped in the plot.

• • •

Frederick Fox has designed an interesting set for the comedy. It represents a living room with stairs leading up to a bedroom at stage right; but part of the floor and two of the walls of the upper room have been cut away to allow action on two levels. But despite its new trappings, the play's second-hand situation hasn't been disguised or polished up by its three collaborators. For all its modern angling, the comments do not go deep enough and the laughs do not grow thick enough in "Alice in Arms" to bring it to life for more than an occasional moment at the National.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
February 1, 1945

'Alice in Arms' Fails To Be Convincing

By BURTON RASCOE

DURING the last war one of the popular songs asked the ribald rhetorical question, "How are you going to keep 'em down on the farm, after they have seen Paree?"

"Alice in Arms," a laboriously manufactured little romantic comedy, which opened at the National last night, asks pretty much the same sort of question—though in a more pretentious manner—with reference to the women who have seen overseas service in the western theater of the present war.

Specifically, the authors (L. and M. Bush-Fekete and Sidney Sheldon) ask how can you expect a former resident of a small town, who has experienced the dangers and excitements of the battle front and enjoyed a romantic furlough with a gay and reckless corporal in Paris, to return to the dull and orderly routine she escaped from, marry her old beau and settle down there for life.

The authors answer their own question by saying, in effect, that you can't expect it; and that it would be foolish for any girl, with spirit enough to enlist in the auxilliary services and with beauty enough to attract men, to try it; for she would be forever thereafter dissatisfied and unhappy.

Not Well Constructed

A thesis so propounded might have been, with genuine skill, made into an effective drama or into a credible and entertaining romantic comedy. "Alice in Arms" is merely unskilled theatrical carpentry, with a very slow first act, a roughhouse second act, and a sentimental and "literary" third act, and none of it convincing for a moment.

The story tells of Lt. Alice of the WAC, invalid home after two years overseas. Before duty called her she had been a library assistant, engaged to her childhood sweetheart, now president of a small plant turning out essential war material. She believes she still loves him and wants to marry him if he will have her.

He will, even after she tells him of a brief but romantic love affair she had with a corporal with whom she spent an ecstatic leave in Paris—a now forgotten event of the dead past, she says, which took place "on the moon." But the corporal shows up next day and, moreover, is given a room in the house by the girl's mother because he has no other place to sleep. (Incidentally, a colonel also shows up and proposes marriage; but this is just a low comedy bit to kill time.) Jealous rivalry ensues.

Play Lacks Surprise

There is no surprise in the play whatever. You know the corporal will win the girl, because all the cards are stacked in his favor from the first. The only reason for a third act would have been an ending different from what you expect—with dramatically cogent reasons presented why the girl chose her first love rather than the new. Instead you get the expected ending, with the girl being persuaded by a saccharine and juvenile duet, without music, of the high lights of their spree together. Plus the corporal's sombre dicta why she would never have been satisfied to be tied down to a small town again and should fly away with him.

The principals—Miss Conklin, Kirk Douglas, Roger Clark and Florence Shirley—are attractive, but they, as well as the others, are directed in slipshod and uncertain fashion. The Frederick Fox set, showing a living room and a cutaway upstairs bedroom, is ingenious and pleasant to the eye.

NEW YORK SUN
February 1, 1945

'Alice in Arms' Mild and Skimpy Comedy of the Return of a Pretty Wac

By WARD MOREHOUSE

"ALICE IN ARMS," a three-author job, bustled into the National Theater last night under the guidance of Edward Choate and Marie Louise Elkins and revealed itself as a mild, skimpy and completely uneventful little comedy of a Wac home from the wars.

It has some agreeable moments, this play by L. and M. Bush-Fekete and Sidney Sheldon, and it is played with unflagging zest by Peggy Conklin in the title role, but it is a comedy that is pretty obvious all the way. The second act is by far its best. Things run down badly in the third.

An actual handicap is a tricky stage design which has been put together for "Alice in Arms"—a two-decker setting, upstairs-and-down, of the Madison home in Linwood, Pa. This setting, designed by Frederick Fox, is so good that it is downright distracting. You are frequently watching the players in their movements on the two levels instead of listening to the play.

"Alice in Arms" is all about the attractive Wac, Alice, who had a romance in Normandy with a corporal. Honorably discharged, she returns to the placidity of her small-town home to adjust herself to civilian life and to an oldtime sweetheart, an engineer in a ball-bearing plant, who has been patiently waiting. Alice accepts her Walter and is out with him shopping for a ring when the corporal, now a sergeant, suddenly turns up in Linwood. There you have the situation—and what there is of the play. Alice can't forget the sergeant, the war, or the moon in Normandy. The army wins.

Miss Conklin is charming as the Wac who was a G.I. heroine in France. Kirk Douglas is tolerably good as the Oregon sergeant, who is handy at all things, love-making included. Roger Clark blusters in accordance with script and directorial requirements as the hometown suitor who loses. Florence Shirley is homey and pleasant as Alice's mother. Russell N. Morrison gives something of a characterization to a boarder who becomes forgotten as the play goes along. Tom McElhany, a specialist in amusing bits, contributes another as a garrulous postman.

Edward Choate and Marie Louise Elkins have supplied a production that is better than the play. "Alice in Arms" is a nice and harmless little comedy, definitely on the weak side.

NEW YORK OURNAL-AMERICAN
February 1, 1945

'Alice in Arms' Seen At National Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

LAST NIGHT'S new play did not happen upon the stage of the National Theatre. It happened away off there in Normandy. All we got in 41st St. was the story of something that occurred the other day and a great many miles away, a wishy-washy version of the "Message for Bernice" which, this season and on the road, even Gertrude Lawrence couldn't get on to Broadway.

There's honest-to-goodness humanity in "Alice In Arms," but the authors, L. and M. Bush-Fekete and Sidney Shelton, have almost deliberately done nothing much about it.

In a tricky and thoroughly unconvincing double-decked setting by Frederick Fox, the characters run upstairs, downstairs and into my lady's chamber with neither reason nor conviction. Nothing actually happens up in Alice's room that couldn't just as well happen down on the National's stage.

All Mr. Fox has provided is a distracting *mise en scene* for a practically plotless play that could do very well without it. Whatever action "Alice In Arms" provides has already happened far, far away. All you do at the National is hear about it.

Some Trio

In case it matters, which, as last night is my witness, it really doesn't, "Alice In Arms" has to do with a conceited and not particularly alluring Wac who, after two seasons overseas, returns to her double-decker home somewhere in Pennsylvania.

As far as this first nighter is concerned, she could have remained abroad indefinitely. But the fact is that she didn't and the result is that, in the tiny town of Linwood, she is the main female attraction, the self-constituted Mae West, Joan of Arc and Frances Perkins rolled into one.

As a matter of truth telling, I found Alice Madison a particularly irritating character. All evening, down there in 41st St., she just couldn't decide which man-about-the-cast was going to win her. Frankly, I was sorry for the Sgt. Steve who did. From now on he'll have his hands, rather than his heart, full.

But, listening to the playwrights you'd think he had fallen into a female gold mine. Well, Steve can have her. And welcome! He, poor fellow, has to take Alice's family and friends along with her.

That's some taking.

Praise for Peggy

Peggy Conklin, beloved because of "The Pursuit of Happiness" and "Yes My Darling Daughter," puts her best foot forward as the unattractive heroine of "Alice In Arms." But even Peggy can't put Alice over. She's a conceited, self-conscious, not very attractive girl, and I doubt if Tallulah Bankhead, Katharine Cornell and Helen Hayes could do anything likeable about her.

If I had a stepson and didn't much admire him, I wouldn't wish Alice Madison on him. The authors, not the actress, haven't done right by their Alice.

Kirk Douglas makes a personable Sgt. Steve. Tied up for life with Alice, I'm sorry for him. Florence Shipley is a not too unworthy Daisy. The others, I think, are less than average, especially the Mike of Johnnie Venn, the Henry of Mickey Stewart, the Beeker of George Ives and the Col. Benson of G. Albert Smith.

No matter what its name—it used to be known as "Star in the Window"—"Alice In Arms" is no great shakes as entertainment. I can't remember when I've come across so unaffording a would-be heroine.

I just don't care about her. Or her play.

NEW YORK POST
February 1, 1945

'Alice in Arms' Ought to Be Reported to Col. Hobby

By WILELLA WALDORF

IT was inevitable that Broadway should eventually see a play about a Wac returned from the wars, and there it was last night at the National. "Alice in Arms" is the title and it took three people to write it and two more to produce it. This seems somewhat excessive when you consider that it is a foolish little comedy with very few laughs in it and an abundance of dull chatter that becomes very tiring before the evening is over.

Alice Madison, a Lieutenant no less, is honorably discharged (malaria) after two years in the service, including some very giddy adventures overseas, especially in and around Paris. On her return to Linwood, Pa., via bomber, she is immediately embraced by her old sweetheart, Walter, head of the local ball-bearing works, and is about to marry him when who should turn up but Sergeant Steve Grant from the Western Front. Steve thinks she's going to marry him.

Alice has just purchased a new flame-colored evening gown for the country club dance when in comes Colonel Benson, her old chief, bringing the ocmpliments of the regiment and a heart full of love. The colonel wants her to call him Harry and forthwith proposes in courtly fashion.

If the authors and producers of "Alice in Arms" patriotically designed their little treatise as a recruiting poster for the Wac they are probably going to be disappointed. Not a single young woman in our vicinity last night showed signs of being sufficiently carried away to rush out and enlist, and we very much doubt if the Corps is going to benefit at all. In fact, quite the contrary.

General Eisenhower is presumably still abroad, although we rather expected him to walk in during the third act and say "Call me Ike."

BUY BONDS

"Up in Central Park"

Musical play, with book by Herbert and Dorothy Fields, lyrics by Dorothy Fields, music by Sigmund Romberg, book staged by John Kennedy, dances staged by Helen Tamiris, settings and lighting by Howard Bay, costumes by Grace Houston and Ernest Schraps, orchestra directed by Max Meth, orchestrations by Don Walker, presented by Michael Todd at the Century Theatre, Saturday, January 27, 1945.

THE CAST

A Laborer	Bruce Lord
Danny O'Cahane	Walter Burke
Timothy Moore	Charles Irwin
Bessie O'Cahane	Betty Bruce
Rosie Moore	Maureen Cannon
John Matthews	Wilbur Evans
Thomas Nast	Maurice Burke
William Dutton	John Quigg
Andrew Munroe	Robert Field
Vincent Peters	Paul Reed
Mayor A. Oakey Hall	Rowan Tudor
Richard Connolly	George Lane
Peter Sweeney	Harry Meehan
William Marcey Tweed	Noah Beery Sr.
Butler	Herman Glazer
Mildred Wincor	Lydia Fredericks
Joe Stewart	Fred Barry
Porter	Harry Matlock
Lotta Stevens	Delma Byron
Fanny Morris	Kay Griffith
Clara Manning	Martha Burnett
James Fisk Jr.	Watson White
Daniel	Daniel Nagrin
Governess	Louise Holden
First Child	Ann Hermann
Second Child	Joan Lally
Third Child	Janet Lally
Fourth Child	Mary Alice Evans
Headwaiter	John Quigg
Page Boy	Henri Capri
Arthur Finch	Wally Coyle
Ellen Lawrence	Elaine Barry
Bicycle Rider	Stanley Schimmel
George Jones	Guy Standing Jr.
Bagpipe Players—	
Isobel Glasgow, James McFadden and Thomas Lorimer.	
Kenneth Casey and Teddy Casey	
Organ Grinders—	
William Nuss and Charles Wood	
Newsboys—	

NEW YORK TIMES
January 29, 1945

"Up in Central Park"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

BEING a typical New Yorker, by virtue of having come from somewhere else, Mike Todd is saluting local grandeur in his latest musical show, "Up in Central Park," which brought Saturday night to the New Century, is almost as big as its namesake, and it is just as pretty to look at. There, however, the favorable comparison must end. The Park teems with life and zest and gaiety, the show does not. "Up in Central Park" plods along where it should dance, it talks where it should laugh; it is long and, to be frank about it, is pretty dull. The Park should form a wonderful setting for a musical show, but this one needs someone like Commissioner Moses to do a bit of landscaping or doctoring.

• • •

The book constantly gets in the way of the show. Having been commissioned to write a story about the park, Herbert and Dorothy Fields cast around and discovered the Tweed Ring's depredations therein. Their tale is of the Ring and of this newspaper's efforts to smash it; their hero is a reporter who gathered the evidence and wrote it. The book is completely lacking in humor; the Fields team has been caught in the bonds of history and has been held there firmly. The books of most musicals are not their strong points, and this one is even a bit weaker than usual.

Sigmund Romberg's score is pleasant enough in a nostalgic fashion. There are several good songs—"Carrousel in the Park," "It Doesn't Cost You Anything to Dream" and "Close as Pages in a Book" are three of them. Most of them are nicely sung. But there is a sameness about both the music and the singing, and the repetition of mood grows monotonous by the end of the evening. The dances, contrived by Helen Tamiris, are period pieces, and there is a sameness about them, too. Into the costumes and Howard Bay settings Mr. Todd has thrown all his fortunes; they are opulent and beautiful, but they also serve to accent the barrenness of much of the material.

• • •

Wilbur Evans is the young Times reporter, and he is a credit to this paper. His voice is good, and his manner is pleasant. Maureen Cannon is the girl—the Fields' withdrawal from history was to build up a love affair between the newspaper man and the daughter of a Tweed heeler—and she is agreeable also. Betty Bruce has a comedy part, or a part as near to comedy as the show permits, and sings a little and does one of her excellent tap dances. Fred and Elaine Barry also are there for dances, Noah Beery is Tweed and Charles Irwin is the girl's father. The singing choruses do their work well.

There can be no question that "Up in Central Park" is pretty to watch. Virtually, it is like a lace valentine or some of the Currier and Ives prints stressed in the show itself. But it is empty none the less; the figures in the prints have not come to life. The Park—and even the Tweed Ring—offer better opportunities than the show has fulfilled.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
January 29, 1945

'Central Park' a Souvenir Album of Tunes, Dances and Tintypes

By JOHN CHAPMAN

MICHAEL TODD'S musical, "Up in Central Park," is about the New York of the early 1870's. It is a souvenir album of picture postcards by designer Howard Bay, and a memory-book of songs by Sigmund Romberg. It has about it a pleasant, horse-drawn air.

The show is at its best when it is singing or dancing, for a Romberg tune is unmistakably a Romberg tune—a fruity job, and never a thing to trick you; and Helen Tamiris has devised two enchanting dance numbers for all the boys and girls. The show clops along at its most leisurely pace when it is dealing with the plot, which concerns the successful efforts of a Times man and Cartoonist Thomas Nast to expose Boss Tweed and his graft ring.

Mr. Todd, Mr. Romberg, Mr. Bay and the authors, Herbert and Dorothy Fields, have given care and affection to "Up in Central Park." They have wanted, I think, to shift into a lower gear—to make a musical which is warm, gentle and affectionate instead of one which is brash, fast and smarty-smarty. On the whole they have succeeded, and the Century Theatre, although it is just south of 59th St., seems to be a bit of the park as it must have been in fonder days.

Lush Melodies

The songs are handled mostly by Maureen Cannon and Wilbur Evans, and their "It Doesn't Cost You Anything to Dream," "April Snow" and "Close as Pages in a Book" are lush Rombergian melodies.

Miss Cannon, a pert Irish lass from George Abbott's "Best Foot Forward," portrays the daughter of a lowly subcontractor who is helping Boss Tweed remake Central Park at several thousand dollars per tree. Her sidekick is the dancer, Betty Bruce, whose father is another toiler in the park.

The girls crave to rise in the world—to leave 23d St., become famous, get into society and go to such places as Delmonico's and the Stetson Hotel (which was in the Park). In fact, they introduced themselves to the audience by singing a number titled "Up from the Gutter."

A happy stroke of casting is the choice of Noah Beery (THE Noah Beery, not his son) as Boss Tweed. He has the paunch, the arrogance and the punch to fit the character, and his part in the singing of "Boss Tweed" is one of the high spots of the evening.

There are, be it noted, no dream ballets. Just dances—but some lovely ones. There is a production number which begins as a series of Currier & Ives tableaux, which are amusing, and which ends with a "Skating in Central Park" dance which is a complete delight. Again, so simple a thing as a maypole dance at Tammany picnic is utterly charming.

Evans Sings Aplenty

Mr. Evans, as the Times man on the Tweed trail, sings lustily—alone, in duets with Miss Cannon and with Mr. Romberg's favorite musical instrument, the male chorus. Maurice Burke, as Nast (who was, I seem to remember, the first political cartoonist), trails with him. Miss Bruce, in addition to being a lively comedienne, is also an extraordinary tap dancer.

There is a very good dance specialty by Fred and Elaine Barry. Most rousing of the choral songs is "The Big Back Yard." Also to be mentioned among the interesting items are a dance version of "Rip Van Winkle" and a number called "The Fireman's Bride."

Any set by Howard Bay can hardly be anything but just right, and such is the case with "Up in Central Park." Whether full-stage or just drops, his scenes are delightful. There is a view of the park in a snowstorm; a plushy hotel interior; the bird house, the gardens, the Mall; and, for a finale, the bandstand in summertime.

Max Meth conducts a very good orchestra with his accustomed zip. John Kennedy staged the book, and Grace Houston and Ernest Schraps have designed some handsome costumes.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
January 29, 1945

Sweet, Slow and Sentimental

By OTIS L. GUERNSEY JR.

MUSICAL reminiscences of Central Park in the 1870's are sweet, slow and sentimental at the Century Theater. Michael Todd's "Up in Central Park," which made its bow on Saturday night, paints a bright-colored Currier and Ives portrait of New York's back yard in the Boss Tweed era, doing so in a style that is closer to operetta than to musical comedy. Todd has assembled a flawless production in his first try at the medium; and Sigmund Romberg, an operetta maestro of long standing, has contributed a lovely score. The book of "Up in Central Park" doesn't match their efforts; nevertheless, two-thirds of the show is charming enough to be worth 100 per cent of a ticket at the Century.

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Romance with a touch of sadness is the keynote of the Romberg music, most of it sung by baritone Wilbur Evans and soprano Maureeen Cannon. She is the daughter of a Tammany ward heeler and he is "The Times" reporter who is going to expose the whole Tweed gang, so their love affair is destined for heartbreak. This situation is outlined by the clear-cut Dorothy Fields lyrics in "It Doesn't Cost You Anything to Dream," "Close as Pages in a Book" and "April Snow," all numbers that bear repeating in the show. "The Fireman's Bride" at the Act I finale is a rousing waltz, and also in a lighter vein are "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Big Back Yard." Both the principals have voices that are excellent for operetta music and little Miss Cannon makes an appealing heroine opposite Evans's calm and smiling newspaper reporter.

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The show has a tendency to hang back with its book, especially in Act I, when its life depends on the production breaks. Dancer Fred Barry takes a well earned spotlight in these, the best of which is a Currier and Ives number. The book has him showing his gal the nineteenth century version of etchings, and the prints are posed by members of the cast, the last one being a graceful ballet version of a

skating scene. Todd's production genius has dressed all the numbers up in gay, varicolored costumes by Grace Houston and Ernest Schraps and set them against tasteful period surroundings designed by Howard Bay. From the horses and buggies on the curtain through the red and blue Stetson Hotel lobby, the white park-in-winter backdrop with snow falling before it, the green and summery Tammany Hall picnic, right down to the last glimpse of the bandstand on the Mall, the scenery of "Up in Central Park" justifies the title with simple but revealing outlines.

* * *

Noah Berry Sr. is the rough, rich and conscientious Boss Tweed, and the only matter for regret in the show is that Herbert and Dorothy Fields haven't made the Boss and his satellites a more important part of the story. He is the pivotal point of the book, and yet the show takes a long time getting around to him and gives him very little to do after he finally appears. The musical has the usual quota of love scenes and some funny goings on by Charles Irwin and Walter Burke as a pair of Tammany Democrats; it only remained for the writers to build the grafters who made millions out of construction work in the park into more than convenient symbols. When they are not conniving, the plot sags; a dose of riproaring villainy would have welded the show together, set it moving faster and given it even more authentic Old New York atmosphere than it actually has. But even as is, "Up in Central Park" contains an eyeful of operetta production and an earful of musical pleasure.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
January 29, 1945

'Up in Central Park' Belongs on Must List

By BURTON RASCOE

WHEN you have music by the master melodist, Sigmund Romberg, conducted by the orchestral magician, Max Meth, a literate book and lively lyrics by Herbert and Dorothy Fields, I'd say you can't miss.

And, with that combination, plus a first-class and tasty all-around production, Michael Todd has certainly rung the bell with "Up in Central Park" at the Century. This is one of the most charming musicals ever staged and doubtless will become a classic.

As quaint, colorful and spirited as a Currier & Ives skating print, "Up in Central Park" sets a new standard for musical comedies and operettas in the sustained dramatic importance of the book. It is not a mere boy-meets-girl story but a genuine bit of New York history and a thoughtful contribution to Americana.

Progress Linked to Graft

A cynic once remarked that all progress under democracy in America has been achieved by bribery and graft; great bridges have been built, railroads have spanned the continent, canals have been dug, highways have been paved, schools and colleges have been erected and cities beautified, by that apparently necessary corruption which transpires between vision and the parting of the taxpayer with his money.

"Up in Central Park" tells how New York's ugly "Back Yard" was landscaped, swarded, benched, zooed, malled, museumed, paved, risked, bridle-pathed, beautified and patrolled and made the lovely thing we all now enjoy only because it offered Boss Tweed of Tammany and his deserving Democrats a rich field for swindling the taxpayers.

The musical tells, also, in very sprightly and engaging manner, the story of how John Mathews, a reporter for The New York Times, and Thomas Nast, a cartoonist for Harper's Weekly, got the goods on Tweed and his cohorts, and, in defiance of dire threats and fabulous offers of bribe money, justified the journalist's profession and America's freedom of the press, broke the "Tweed Ring" wide open and sent the Big Boss himself to Blackwell's Island on charges of forgery and grand larceny. (Incidentally, Tweed escaped and fled to Spain; on his return he was thrown into Ludlow St. jail, which he had neglected to exploit as a source of graft to make it hygienic and, in consequence, died of exposure on April 12, 1878.)

Romantic Theme

The story tells also (for purely romantic purposes; it has no justification in history) of the love of Mathews (Wilbur Evans) for Rosie Moore (Maureen Cannon), the untaught singing daughter of a Tammany construction foreman, and of her marriage—in revenge for what Mathews had done to her father—to Connolly, the City Comptroller (George Lane); and of her release to Mathews' bed and board when it was discovered that Connolly was not only a fugitive from justice but a bigamist whose troth to Rosie was without binding, religious or civil.

As a background we have scenes imaginatively recreated and lighted by Howard Bay from old prints: Central Park when it was a shanty-town city dump, a gaudy lounge in the Stetson Hotel of 1870, the bird house in Central Park, the Central Park Gardens of 1871, the office of the owner of The Times, the Mall in Central Park and the bandstand. A snowfall for the musical number, "April Snow," is one of the most enchanting scenes ever devised for the stage, and the music accompanying it is a ravishment to the ears.

Most of Romberg's music is lush and singable and full of romantic schmalz. There are four songs—"When She Walks in the Room," "It Doesn't Cost You Anything to Dream," "Close as Pages in a Book," and "April Snow," which stir the pulse and make you want to hum them as you walk up the aisle, especially, "When She Walks in the Room." But Romberg has a gift for knowing just when two-step and waltz time need relief; and so he breaks the time and mood into fast comedic pieces such as "Rip Van Winkle," "The Fireman's Bride" and "The Birds and the Bees" (this last, an extremely comical satire on the difficulties of sex instruction to the young; it should be palatable to a deacon, so innocent is it).

Cast Adequate

The cast is adequate rather than outstanding. Wilbur Evans gets the most out of full-volumed numbers like "When You Walk in a Room," but he is a singer, not an actor, and his personality is negative. Maureen Cannon is sweet and pretty, but her soprano is just passable. Betty Bruce in a comic role has two tap specialties, but whether she is really good or not I couldn't tell, because her fans in the audience (like Sinatra's bobby-soxers who won't let you hear him) drowned out her taps with noisy applause every time she went into a routine requiring delicacy and precision. Minor players in straight parts—Noah Beery, Maurice Burke, Charles Irwin and Guy Standing Jr.—were very good indeed.

The dances by Helen Tamaris are, happily, choral and not too choreographic, two items—"Maypole Dance" and "Finaletto" being rhythmic delights. The only ballet specialists are Fred and Elaine Barry, who don't overwork it. And the best dancer is a girl in the ensemble who, in one number, wears a blue dress and red underthings; I can't figure out from the program, what her name is.

My suggestion is: Add "Up in Central Park" to your list of "musts."

NEWYORK SUN
January 29, 1945

'Up in Central Park,' New Operetta, Offers Labored Book, Excellent Score

By WARD MOREHOUSE

MICHAEL TODD moved up to the fringes of New York's big back yard Saturday night and moved into the Century Theater and there he presented his new musical production—a big, costly, good-looking song and dance spectacle to which Sigmund Romberg has contributed a first-rate score. "Up in Central Park" is the title of a show that is Mr. Todd's most ambitious, and perhaps his most creditable, contribution to the local stage.

It's an operetta, actually, and a period piece of New York of seventy-five years ago. It is at its best when it is being sung because there is book trouble, definitely. There is plenty of book—frequently a great deal too much of it, for there are many moments when the entertainment struggles with very weak comedy. On the credit side, there are the songs and some lovely stage groupings and backgrounds. The "Currier and Ives" number, which presents a wintertime snow and skating scene, is particularly beautiful.

Sigmund Romberg, who was writing for the Shuberts in the years when the Winter Garden was considered way uptown, has given "Up in Central Park" several enchanting numbers. "When She Walks in the Room" and "Close as Pages in a Book" are outstanding. There's a certain buoyancy to such tunes as "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Fireman's Bride," which provides the first-act finale.

"Up in Central Park" is New York of the 1870s. Herbert and Dorothy Fields have devised a book having to do with William Marcy (Boss) Tweed, Grand Sachem of Tammany Hall, and the scandalous depredations and plunderings of his notorious ring, which goes in for no end of looting of the city treasury in connection with the building of Central Park. In the book at the Century the exposure of the Tweed gang comes about through the tireless efforts of one John Matthews, reporter of the New York Times, and Thomas Nast, cartoonist for Harper's Weekly. The book writers also present the romance of the dashing Mr. Matthews and Rosie Moore, construction foreman's daughter, who has the yearnings, and the natural talent, to sing like Jenny Lind. All is well with Rosie and John, if not with Boss Tweed and his henchmen, when the exercises at the Century are prettily concluded.

It is not a "name" cast that Mr. Todd has assembled for his new production, but it's a company that does well enough with song and story. Maureen Cannon, whose parents came from County Donegal and are proud of it, took over the role of the Irish Rosie only the other day. She sings well and is quite pleasant. Wilbur Evans is vocally excellent as the romantic Matthews, certainly the most splendidly attired reporter of his day and time. Betty Bruce of the twinkling feet, is a very spirited performer all evening, gets some comedy into her "Birds and the Bees" number, and in the second act comes along with her tap dance, for which we had all been waiting.

Noah Beery, looking as if he had just stepped out the '70s, is wonderful as Boss Tweed, who turns a profit on everything in Central Park from rest houses to sheep. Mr. Beery is unctuous, overbearing and terrifying. Fred and Elaine Barry do some nice dancing. Maurice Burke is agreeable and believable as Cartoonist Nast. Walter Burke and Charles Irwin are burdened with some terribly tiresome and feeble comedy.

Dorothy Fields, besides serving as co-author of the book, has done the lyric-writing job and it's one of her best. Howard Bay's settings are lovely and there are colorful costumes by Grace Houston and Ernest Schraps.

"Up in Central Park," representing a new phase in Michael Todd's career, is an eye-filling operetta of New York of long ago—atmospheric and melodious, and revealing Mr. Romberg its composer, in good form. The book has many labored moments but the over-all effect of the Century's new show is one of beauty—and charm.

NEW YORK JOURNAL AMERICAN
January 29, 1945

'Up in Central Park' Bows at New Century

By ROBERT GARLAND

THAT fabulous fellow, Michael Todd, has passed a miracle. A miracle which is as miraculous as "Showboat" and, to come right out and say so, "Oklahoma" put together. This out-of-the-world concoction is "Up in Central Park," an operatic nostralgia with libretto by Herbert and Dorothy Fields and score by Sigmund Romberg.

Each, after his fashion, has done a job which is pretty near perfection. And Mr. Todd, functioning as producer, has backed them up to the best of his productional ability.

By which I mean to say that the book has been staged by John Kennedy, that the dances have been arranged by Helen Tamaris, that the settings have been designed by Howard Bay, that the costumes have been evolved by Grace Huston and Ernest Schraps, that the orchestrations have been concocted by Don Walker and the orchestra was, and, from now on will be, directed by Max Meth.

Mr. Meth, as every theatre-goer knows, has a way with a baton down there when needed in the orchestral pit.

Realizing what he has when he has it—and what he has is one of the best words-and-music get-togethers ever assembled in America—the fabulous fellow from 56th St. has spared neither expense nor pains to make the most of them. "Up in Central Park" is a flawless honest-to-Todd production.

Tammany Is It

As you have surmised, "Up in Central Park" has to do with the incredible 1870's and the William Marcey Tweed who sat in the City Hall seat now occupied by Fiorella LaGuardia, the Little Flower. According to Saint Tell-Tale.

Personally, and in passing, librettists Herbert and Dorothy Fields have made of the late and, to me, lamented Mr. Tweed a likeable, even loveable, Mayor. No gentle grafter that he is, it isn't in him to urge Baby Bessie or Junior John to snitch on Mamma or Papa.

But Boss Tweed is not the hero of "Up in Central Park," as unheroic a hero as Boss Tweed might be. The hero of Saturday night's arrival at the Century, is—excuse me, Chief, for mentioning it—the New York Times.

It seems that, a way back in those pre-Roosevelt days, a certain John Matthews, aided and abetted by Thomas Nast, cartoonist for Harper's Weekly, was hot on the tail of William Marcey Tweed, Grand Sachem of Tammany Hall, and his chiseling co-Tammanyites. Including laborer Timothy Moore.

There is no need to tell you that Timothy has a daughter, a wonderful wench called Rosie. And that Rosie is in love with—and I give you three guesses, although I don't know what you are going to do with the other two! You're right in the first place. She's in love with, and desperately, John Matthews of the New York Times.

Rah! Rah! For Rosie

Frankly, I've no adequate words with which to praise the little lady who pretends to be Rosie Moore up on the Century's stage. Her name is Maureen Cannon and she's wonderful. She's got everything! She's got good looks, added to which is piquancy. She's got charm, added to which is sincerity. She's got a voice, added to which is the ability to make the most of it.

You may have picked her out in "Best Foot Forward" or, if in the good old Summer-time, you drop in to the St. Louis Municipal Opera.

Wilbur Evans gives out all the news thats fit to print as John Matthews—sorry, Boss—of the New York Times. His is the haunting "When She Walks In the Room," Noah Beery does a creditable impersonation of William Marcey Tweed, going so far as to lift his voice in song when he and five other members of the cast break out with "Rip Van Winkle."

The lesser performers are as they should be, and the song hits, other than those already mentioned, are "Close As Pages In a Book," "The Big Back Yard" and "It Doesn't Cost You Anything to Dream."

Getting back to that fabulous producer, he has out-fabuloused himself in "Up In Central Park." The operetta, and it is an operetta, has what it takes. It has a good straightforward story. It has a good melodic score. It has a good, well-balanced cast. Year before last it was "Showboat." Last year it was "Oklahoma." Now, praise be to Todd, it's "Up In Central Park" at the Century.

NEW YORK POST
January 29, 1945

'Up in Central Park' At Century—Now It's Currier & Ives & Todd

By JAMES ARONSON

IT WASN'T quite real, last Saturday night after the opening of Michael Todd's "Up in Central Park" at the Century Theatre. I mean riding from the theatre in a brougham (courtesy Mr. Todd) through the snow-covered hills and meadows of the Park, to a midnight supper for the company (same courtesy) at the Tavern-on-the-Green.

As we rode through the still night, listening to the clop-clop of the horse's hooves, I recalled a childhood song: "Pony, if you want to please your master, you must trot a little faster." And that, I thought, would have been a pretty good slogan for the people who put "Up in Central Park" together.

But, you say, Currier & Ives didn't always race their horses, so why should Todd? True enough. So, allowing for some slowness of pace, the over-all finding this Monday is a nostalgic musical with magnificent settings, catchy tunes, a book that makes sense and pretty singing and dancing. That should make a pleasant evening—and does.

It is said that Mr. Todd got his inspiration for his show by looking at Boston Common. He didn't have to. Central Park is inspiration enough, and the story of how Boss Tweed & Co. almost milked the city dry while building the park is a natural. Herbert and Dorothy Fields framed their story around this master plunderer and the gentleman from the Times who proved his undoing. An earnest young gentleman who fell in love with the daughter of a Tammany hack, alack (and almost alas).

The staging and the settings were the high spots for me. Howard Bay and Helen Tamiris reproduced a Currier & Ives skating pond in the park which I almost preferred to the original.

Next on my list was Maureen Cannon, who played and sang Rosie Moore with all the authenticity of a County Donegal heritage. She's a bright little miss with a small sweet voice and a great deal of charm. Wilbur Evans played the journalist (you can't call a man in a high hat a newspaper man) with considerable dash and pleasant heroics. Betty Bruce worked hard with some meagre comedy.

Noah Beery was a fine Boss Tweed—big, paunchy, pompous and stuffed to the ears with greenbacks. Too bad there wasn't more of him. I liked Fred and Elaine Barry's dancing too.

Too much of the humor was of the begorra-begorra, back-of-me-hand-to-ye school, straight off the ancient four-a-day boards. At times the vaudeville brogue was so thick you couldn't smell the flowers in the park for the corned beef and cabbage. And I like corned beef and cabbage.

Of the Sigmund Romberg tunes, the ones that stick are "Carrousel in the Park," "It Doesn't Cost You Anything to Dream" and "When She Walks in the Room."

You can't pick flaws, but I think it's safe to say that if you love New York you'll like "Up in Central Park." So, the top o' the evenin' to ye, Mike Todd, and the rest of the season to your show.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
January 29, 1945

A Dull Tour of Central Park

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

THE way things are going, any day now the more progressive schools will start teaching kids American history by making a round of the musical shows. For an over-all view, classes could get going with *Sing Out, Sweet Land*. *Bloomer Girl* would cover Abolitionism and the Civil War. *Oklahoma!* would provide a graphic glimpse of the frontier. And now there is *Up in Central Park* to throw light on the age of Grant and the Tweed Ring.

All this isn't quite so whimsical as it may sound, for *Up in Central Park* seems to me a better history lesson than it is a show. In chronicling the grand-scale buccaneering of Tweed and his Tammany associates Herbert and Dorothy Fields have taken great pains to be accurate, boning up on the subject as though they were writing a Ph.D. thesis. It is too bad, in the circumstances, that they didn't take equal pains to be amusing. It's too bad, in general, that *Up in Central Park*, which has been produced with taste and is very likely the most charmingly mounted musical of the season, should so altogether lack snap. It's a period piece that just never comes to life.

Possibly the crusade to smash the Tweed Ring is—even with a romance between one of the crusaders and a Tammany man's daughter thrown in—not an inspired theme for musical comedy. At least for nostalgic musical comedy: Tweed & Co., with their $3,850,000 items for carpeting the County Courthouse, would seem better suited to a hard-hitting musical satire. Possibly, too, in terms of a whole evening, Sigmund Romberg's rather pretty but dated and undiversified score has a slightly sedative effect. Even the dancing, though very pleasant in its way, is hurt by its lack of variety. And the whole show is badly hurt not only by lacking a live-wire comic, but by virtually dispensing with comedy. Neither has it any pace. The real hero of the evening is Howard Bay, whose stylish, glossy and amusing sets evoke an era that nobody has bothered to animate.

Mr. Romberg's music has, to be sure, its agreeable side: if it is too reminiscent and unvaried, at least, it is often melodious enough. And in Maureen Cannon and Wilbur Evans, *Up in Central Park* has the right voices for the songs, Miss Cannon being pretty and engaging into the bargain. Betty Bruce could doubtless handle the comedy if there were any; and Noah Beery both looks and acts as Tweed might have. Dorothy Fields' lyrics are nothing special, but they are at least brighter than the book.

It's too bad that *Up in Central Park* can't shake off dullness, for it's a commendable departure from formula musicals. The trouble is, it departed with only the haziest idea of its destination.

Now Available **Motion Picture Critic's Reviews**

"The Tempest"

Play by William Shakespeare; production and staging by Margaret Webster; original music by David Diamond; settings and costumes by Motley; lighting by Moe Hack; based on a production idea by Eva Le Gallienne; orchestra under the direction of David Diamond; presented by Cheryl Crawford at the Alvin Theater Thursday evening, January 25, 1945.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
January 26, 1945

Webster's 'Tempest' Is Exciting; Canada Lee's Caliban Splendid

By JOHN CHAPMAN

ONCE more has Margaret Webster brought excitement to the stage—a rich and deep excitement. This lady, whose quickening of Shakespeare is by now well known, last night put upon the platforms and turntable of the Alvin Theatre a clear, clean, absorbing production of "The Tempest."

This comedy has not often been produced here and I am not enough of a graybeard to recall it from other times and thus have a basis for comparison. I can only report that last night two performances moved me to enthusiasm and a third to delight.

Canada Lee's portrayal of the monster, Caliban, is one by which I shall measure all other readings in the years that are left. It is most beautifully spoken; it is at once fearsome and touching. It is one more evidence that Mr. Lee is a thoughtful, ambitious and resourceful actor.

Arnold Moss, as the sorcerer, Prospero, gives to his role not only the physical dignity of a Shakespearean king, but also the kingliness and dignity inherent in the words he speaks. He has the necessary command of the stage, as well as of his actor subjects.

As the sprightliest of these subjects, the spirit Ariel, Vera Zorina provides delight. I doubt that there could be an Ariel more graceful than she as she casts her spells and evokes her magic music. She speaks clearly, but I think her underlying Scandinavian accent, no matter how carefully it is controlled, weights down somewhat the implicit airiness of her lines. But not enough to matter, when one considers her form and grace.

Typical of Miss Webster

The production is typical of Margaret Webster—simple and swift, but yet unhurried, except for the shipwreck scene which starts things off. This prologue, I thought, was too feverish. In this sorcerer's tempest lines were lost, as well as the ship. The grimly humorous observation that the bos'n was born to hang and not to drown so nearly vanished that the "I told you so" at the end of the play lost its punch.

The comedy itself is in two acts and in one set—but this set, mounted upon a turntable, has many sides and presents many places on Prospero's isle. It is a simple thing of steps and crags, and those who want their Shakespeare with all the meat upon it may object a bit when they must imagine rather than see the thickets and brambles through which Ariel leads the two comedy drunks. But I shall not object at all, for by this device Miss Webster and the designers, Motley, keep things moving.

Jan Werich, as Stephano, and George Voskovec, as Trinculo, play the comedy stews as broadly as Shakespeare wrote them. Frances Heflin is a properly sweet and modest Miranda and Vito Christi a true and gentle Ferdinand. Last night's audience rather spoiled their first quiet love scene with an inordinate fit of coughing and nose-blowing, but they managed well nevertheless.

Miss Webster's reverence for Shakespeare is genuine—but intelligent; she is not one to let a text stand in the way of practicality. Thus, she brings down the curtain upon a speech which Prospero should have uttered some scenes before—the fine one whose most familiar words are, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on." It makes an excellent and fitting period to the play and old William should have thought of it himself.

Music for the production has been composed and is conducted by David Diamond. I think Mr. Diamond has heard Sibelius' "The Swan of Tuonela," but whether he has or not the score fits nicely. Cheryl Crawford is the producer, and Miss Webster, the director, acknowledges that the idea for the manner of staging is Eva Le Gallienne's.

THE CAST

Shipmaster	Joseph Hardy
Boatswain	Steven Elliott
Alonso	Philip Huston
Gonzalo	Paul Leyssac
Antonio	Berry Kroeger
Sebastian	Eugene Stuckmann
Prospero	Arnold Moss
Miranda	Frances Heflin
Ariel	Vera Zorina
Caliban	Canada Lee
Ferdinand	Vito Christi
Adrian	Jack Bostick
Trinculo	George Voskovec
Stephano	Jan Werich
Master of Ceremonies	Larry Evers
Dancer	Diana Sinclair

Mariners, shapes and spirits: Steven Elliott, Larry Evers, Joseph Hardy, Norman Peck, Charlotte Keane, Diana Sinclair, Patricia Wheel.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
January 26, 1945

Brave New Shakespeare

By OTIS L. GUERNSEY JR.

THERE is a honey of a show at the Alvin, and it happens to be a play called "The Tempest" by one William Shakespeare. The Margaret Webster production of this three-hundred-year-old script has resisted all temptation to defy the Bard of Avon in reverent though dusty robes; instead it brings the play to town clothed in brand new and exciting theatrical raiment. Cut down to modern length in two acts with none of the essentials lacking; played upon revolving sets that are simple and yet allow for the illusion of many scene changes; beautifully dressed by Motley; performed by a fine cast, and brilliantly directed by Miss Webster, "The Tempest" has come out from between its fine leather covers and taken a living place beside the modern Broadway hits.

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However great a play it may be, a good deal of theatrical knowhow is needed to breathe life into "The Tempest." But Miss Webster knows Shakespeare personally. She knows how to temper the cadance of blank verse to both comic and dramatic meaning. She knows how Prospero, a character who is a bit of a stockfish in the mere reading, should stand on a pinnacle in the spotlight when he must be mighty, and just how he must smile and phrase a line when he wishes to be kindly. She knows that Ariel is essentially a ballet dancer, and that Caliban is a perfect role for a Negro. She knows how to shade the most minor characters so that when they are fools they will be laughed at, and when villians, sneered at. She knows that there is a lot of pure spectacle in "The Tempest," and above all, she knows that Shakespeare meant to create a mood of magic enchantment on the island which is the scene of this play. All of this is part and parcel of the show on the Alvin's stage.

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But it took many talents to make up the delightful whole of this production. The strange island on which Duke Prospero is cast with his daughter Miranda is represented by rocks cut into angled shapes and silhouetted against the blue cyclorama, allowing for the playing on many levels and an almost limitless variety of action. The center rock is the largest, rising into two pinnacles and revolving on a turntable to allow for any "another part of the island" the director may wish. It is a set which fits all the conflicting moods of the piece: the low comedy of Caliban and his drunken friends; the despair of Alonso, King of Naples, who is cast up with his court in a shipwreck; the romance of his son Ferdinand with Miranda, and Prospero's fearsome magic, which includes a storm, a disappearing meal and a visitation by a horde of devils coming in eerie shapes.

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The part of Ariel is danced, rather than played, in this production by Vera Zorina. Ariel's prankish humor is lost in her performance, but the sprite's dancing moods are heightened as she skips over the rocks in graceful ballet motion at Prospero's command. Canada Lee makes an excellent Caliban in hideous facial makeup and ragged costume; he plays it with uncouth power, with pathos shelved until the final scene. The outstanding performance at the Alvin is given by Arnold Moss as Prospero. He speaks the lines remarkably well and shades his characterization with dignity, good humor, ferocity or sympathy, as the part demands.

• • •

Frances Heflin plays Miranda, a role that can be diluted with sweet phrases; and it is to her credit that she makes the heroine a girl one is happy to have around. Voskovec and Werich, the Czech comedians, play the clowns in a cast that is uniformly out of the top drawer. Magic is not wrought without music, and so there is an original score by David Diamond that sometimes is part of the action on stage and always fits the mood of the play. The scarlet robe of Prospero and Caliban's weird trappings stand out among Motley's costumes. William Shakespeare wrote a good script, too, but he is fortunate in having such an interpreter as Miss Webster. From curtain to curtain, "The Tempest" is clear and exciting, a three-hundred-year-old, brand new Broadway hit.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
January 26, 1945

Margaret Webster Puts on a New Kind of 'Tempest'

By BURTON RASCOE

MARGARET WEBSTER deserves a medal for bravery. She has dared to put on, in these times, a production of "The Tempest"—the most insubstantial and poetic of Shakespeare's plays—and, with an unerring instinct for showmanship, has costarred Vera Zorina (a ballet dancer) as Ariel, and Canada Lee (a Negro actor who rose to fame as Bigger Thomas in "Native Son") as Caliban.

Almost anybody might imagine that Mr. Lee would make a fine Caliban, but it takes a real genius like Miss Webster to imagine that Miss Zorina would make a fine Ariel and that between the two of them—plus a good production—they would make even "The Tempest" acceptable Broadway fare in a season of stiff competition on the part of numerous first-rate modern plays.

Miss Webster's hunch was right. A ballet dancer—especially one of Miss Zorina's exquisite contours and proportions—is just the thing for Ariel. There never has been an Ariel before (stop me, if I am wrong; I have read "The Tempest" a score of times trying to find out what is so wonderful about it, but I have seen only two previous productions of "The Tempest" and they were perfectly terrible) who made an exit from the stage, as Miss Zorina does—that is, by a ballet dancer's leap.

A New Ariel

Miss Webster has cut Ariel's speeches (and songs) down practically to zero, and that is a very good thing (in this case, at least) for it makes Miss Zorina's role "an airy spirit," practically a role in ballet-pantomine. You won't kick against that once you have seen the lovely Zorina—and heard her. Her body is more elocutionary than her voice.

I suspect Mr. Lee stood before the cage of Gargantua in Ringling Brothers' Circus studying Gargantua's postures and grunts and breathing sounds, in preparation for his

role as Caliban, for, in wondrous costume he was very like Gargantua last night—an articulate Gargantua, to be sure—and Mr. Lee's diction is clear, resonant, for Miss Webster rightly insists that Shakespeare's lines shouldn't all sound like Gabriel Heatter, Caliban's lines last night sounded very like Canada Lee, which I suppose they should sound if you are going to modernize Shakespeare.

Shakespeare Trimmed

"The Tempest," now on view at the Alvin, is not comparable to Miss Webster's production of "Othello" last year, but (pace Samuel Taylor Coleridge and all 19th century and contemporary, undiscriminating idolators of The Swan of Avon) that is Shakespeare's fault, not Miss Webster's. She has edited the text with all the impatient severity of a hard-boiled copyreader on the rim of the city desk tackling the verbose and florid prose of a cub reporter who was dubbed poet laureate of his graduating class at Siwash. She has ruthlessly cut out some of the most preposterous wordage ever penned to confuse sciolists to the point where they gave up and said, "This is the most wonderful poetry in the world" (meaning they couldn't make a bit of sense out of it.)

But, still, the genius of Miss Webster for understanding and pruning Shakespeare for the edification and entertainment of modern audiences can't make "The Tempest" (in my opinion) good theater or even fairly acceptable make-believe. I was conscious all the time of Moe Hack's lighting, the revolving stage which shifts scenes before your very eyes, the costumes by Motley, the personalities of the actors, the variations in the readings of the lines—of everything except the illusion the play is supposed to create.

"The Tempest" is even tough reading, for anybody except Coleridge who took sips from a demijohn of laudanum all day, and Hazlitt who limited himself to two quarts of brandy per diem. If you are in their class, you may enjoy yourself at the Alvin. It is certainly a costly production.

. . . Personally, although I didn't like "Good Night Ladies" very much, I found it more entertaining than "The Tempest."

NEW YORK SUN
January 26, 1945

'The Tempest,' Offered at Alvin, Ingenious and Stimulating Production

By WARD MOREHOUSE

"THE TEMPEST," Shakespeare's play of an enchanted island in a nameless sea, rarely performed in the theater of our time, reached the stage of the Alvin last night via the experienced and skillful hand of Margaret Webster. It is a wieldy and imaginative production of a play not easy to project.

Miss Webster's production of this play of sprites and spirits, of the natural and the supernatural, of Ariel, spirit of the air; Caliban, offspring of witch and devil and creature of the earth, and Prospero, man of magic and sorcery, has movement and color. It is in two parts and is done on a revolving stage, with use of platforms. The scenes are changed easily and ingeniously. And effective and appropriate incidental music has been provided by David Diamond.

This new "Tempest" of 1945, the first presentation of the play locally in a dozen years and brought forth by Cheryl Crawford, has one major fault in that Miss Webster has gone in for too much emphasis on its comedy scenes. The antics of Trinculo and Stephano, jester and butler, provide some cumbersome interludes, low comedy at its worst. But there are other portions that are outstanding and the evening provides some good performances—beautiful ones, in fact, from Arnold Moss and Frances Heflin.

In the presentation at the Alvin it is Prospero, the deposed Duke of Milan, who has lived for twelve years on the island of enchantment with his daughter Miranda, who dominates the play. The monster Caliban comes through as a subordinate character. Canada Lee plays the misshapen and hideous Caliban with great vigor and Vera Zorina, as the darting, Puckish, swallow-like Ariel, who can become invisible or change into the shape of a water nymph, is so much quicksilver. But it is Prospero, of the supernatural gifts, he who can paralyze the sword arm of an adversary and who has grown in goodness and wisdom since becoming an island castaway, who gives "The Tempest" its present vitality.

Arnold Moss is the Prospero and he is admirable. He has great deliberation and clarity and holds his audience completely. Frances Heflin, a rising young actress, quit a hit ("I Remember Mama") for a try at Shakespeare. She is a lovely Miranda and reads the verse with tremendous charm. Vito Christi does well as the prince, Ferdinand, first young man upon whom Miranda's gaze has ever fallen.

Paul Leyssac is excellent as the wise and gabbling old counselor, Gonzalo. There's force to the performance of Berry Kroeger, Eugene Stuckmann and Philip Huston. George Voskovec and Jan Werich have a terrible time trying to get comedy out of the Elizabethan humors of the jester and the butler.

Anyway, "The Tempest" is back. Often held to be Shakespeare's last play and certainly never one of his best, it was done at Jolson's Theater in 1933; performed by the Drama Society of Louis Cavert and John Corbin at the Century in 1916; presented by the Ben Greet Players at the Garden in repertory of 1910, and now Miss Crawford has submitted it at the Alvin.

"The Tempest," as exhibited last evening, is well acted, lighted and costumed. Margaret Webster, who did the staging of "Othello," Broadway's last Shakespearean venture, has again come through with an ingenious and stimulating production.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
January 26, 1945

Zorina in Ariel Role In 'Tempest' Revival

By ROBERT GARLAND

THERE'RE sure to be some mighty high-falutin pieces-in-the-paper about the Margaret Webster production of "The Tempest" which, after fainting in Philadelphia and bucking up in Boston, arrived last night at the Alvin. This isn't going to be one of them!

William Shakespeare's last, and to my way of thinking, least play, is neither a comedy nor a tragedy, a history nor a good Avonian melodrama. A little, but not much, of each of these, it has whimsicality thrown in to boot.

Cheryl Crawford, charming and courageous lady-about-the-theatre, has done everything that could be done to make "The Tempest" seem fresh and entertaining. How nearly she succeeds is a minor miracle of the current season. With a cast headed by Vera Zorina and Canada Lee, Arnold Moss and Vito Christi, Philip Huston and Frances Heflin; with setting and costumes by Motley; with lighting by Moe Hack; with music by David Diamond; with a "production idea" by Eva Le Gallienne; with—

Well, "The Tempest" almost, but not quite, comes to life. Maybe it's the heavy-handed Elizabethan slapstick that defeats it. Maybe it's the plot, which is involved, long-winded and not very interesting. Maybe it's the hocus-pocus Prospero is always pulling out of his sleeve.

I wouldn't exactly know! But I do know that something is wrong, somewhere. I think it's Shakespeare.

Audience Loves It

Something like a century and three-quarters has transpired since "The Tempest" was first shown in New York, up on a lighted stage. At the John St. Theatre, in 1773.

The first time I saw it was at Ford's Grand Opera House, in Baltimore, played good and loud by the Ben Greet Players. This was along about 1910 and Mr. Greet, himself, in person, was Caliban. Several seasons later, the New York Drama Society revived the work at the old Century with Louis Calvert as Prospero.

Between the last World War and this, Max Rinehardt put it on with stunning showmanship in either Berlin or Vienna, I don't remember which. I do recall, however, that it was more a pageant than a play. Then, back here on Manhattan, as recently as 1933 or 1934, an organization known as the Shakespeare Theatre Company, staged the piece once more. Curtis Cooksey, Percival Vivian, Ian Maclaran and Paula Trueman were in this outfit. It reproduced "The Tempest" 10 times. Once was enough for me.

Now it's back on Broadway, with its King of Naples and its Duke of Milan; its honest old Counsellor and its drunken old Butler; its handsome Prince and its ugly Caliban; its go-getting Miranda and its airy, fairy Ariel; its talk, talk, talk. Last night's curiously unfamiliar congregation enjoyed it more than I did. "Out of this world" was the oft-told verdict.

Moss Takes Honors

Arnold Moss, more than any of the others, knows how to handle a Shakespearian line—even a second-rate Shakespearian line—when he gets one. His Prospero is outstanding, sustained, forceful and, I fear, windy.

Philip Huston, is a fine, upstanding Alonzo, King of Naples. Frances Heflin is pretty and one-track-minded as Miranda, who knows what she wants when she sees it. The Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, of Vito Christi is what she wants when she sees it.

Vera Zorina is surprisingly good as Ariel, pictorial, graceful, an impressive speaker of the Shakespeare lines. I was glad when Prospero finally gave that sprite its freedom.

Canada Lee, camouflaged as the hideous and unhappy Caliban, looks more like a bush walking than anything I can think of. His makeup, I feel, is unfortunate. Anyway, he's too forthright an actor to be assigned to a role that calls for grunts rather than for acting. . . .

Cheryl Crawford has shown courage, imagination and admiration for the theatre-going public in producing "The Tempest" and bringing it to Broadway. She with Margaret Webster's stalwart assistance, has endowed the offering with a good deal more than William Shakespeare did. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. But I'm not going back again, either.

NEW YORK POST
January 26, 1945

Margaret Webster Stages 'The Tempest' at the Alvin

By WILELLA WALDORF

"THE TEMPEST," it is generally supposed, was one of the last palys, if not the last, that Shakespeare wrote, and also one of the shortest. Although it contains some haunting poetry, the play as a whole is not one of the Bard's most persuasive works and it is also extremely difficult to produce, being chock-full of magic.

Consequently it is not often presented, especially on Broadway, which is none too well stocked with Shakespeare at any time.

Last night's production at the Alvin Theatre—staged by Margaret Webster and presented by Cheryl Crawford—is intensely theatrical from start to finish and though it is by no means faultless, we found it a fascinating exercise in stagecraft. Beautifully set and costumed by the Motleys, it is equipped with a revolving stage that solves the scene shifting problem, always a stumbling block in modern productions of Shakespeare, with ease and dispatch and also provides a means of permtiting Prospero and Ariel to practice their numerous enchantments gracefully and airily, without too much reliance upon trapdoors and invisible wires. The program credits the idea for the production to Eva LeGallienne, and it struck us as a very good idea indeed.

Part of "The Tempest" is just plain dull and will never be other than that—we refer

especially to the stupid plotting of Sebastian and Antonio to kill the King of Naples while he sleeps, etc., etc.—but if it is well done, there is an enchantment about the play that is inescapable. We felt its enchantment last night whenever Vera Zorina, the Ariel, was on the stage.

Zorina's Ariel is an elaborately stylized creation or perhaps some would say, a choreographic creation, in that it is posed throughout to synchronize with the poetry. But Zorina is not a dancer here. She is an actress of infinite grace and rhythmic beauty who not only makes a most fascinating sprite but speaks her lines with distinction, charm and a genuine feeling for the frolicsome, quicksilver quality of the role. Her singing is her only weakness.

Arnold Moss is an eloquent and impressive Prospero, Canada Lee makes a wonderfully earthy and pathetic Caliban, with a repertoire of expressive grunts and wheezes, and the typical Shakespearean clown scenes are actually rendered fairly funny by Jan Werich as Stephano and George Voskovec as Trinculo. The rest fit in well enough, though the celebrated romantic passages between Miranda and Ferdinand often sounded perfunctory and a trifle high-school assemblyish. David Diamond's music is one of the production's assets.

Miss Webster has wisely eliminated Iris, Ceres and most of the nymphs-and-reapers business, and we had just uneasily reached the conclusion that she had also tossed out Prospero's famous and beautiful speech, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on . . ." when it came along at the very end, substituted for that uninspired epilogue that nobody is quite sure Shakespeare wrote anyway.

It is an excellent arrangement. An impressive ending for an unusual experience in the theatre.

NEW YORK TIMES
January 26, 1945

The Tempest

By LEWIS NICHOLS

As the local and completely-official representative of the Bard, Margaret Webster has given New York another good production of Shakespeare. This Winter it is "The Tempest," which is revived infrequently and offers more than its share of hazards to all but the very brave. Miss Webster has met the challenge in her own way. As Ariel she had cast Vera Zorina, a former dancer, and as Caliban, Canada Lee, a former prize-fighter, and around them she has built a production and an evening that is in the higher bracket. Under the sponsorship of Cheryl Crawford, the play opened last night at the Alvin for an announced eight weeks—but which probably will go on from there.

* * *

Following her custom of withdrawing Shakespeare from the library and putting him on the stage, Miss Webster has not been formal with "The Tempest." The human and spirit populations of the Alvin's stage are easy; they are not simply delivering duly cadenced lines. Comedy scenes are put on for all the boisterousness there is in them, sometimes perhaps even a bit more. Miss Webster is not one to deny the theatre its flash of fire when Prospero chooses to exert his magic, and she knows the place for brief and casual dances. Whether "The Tempest" shows Shakespeare as a tired man or shows him at the height of his genius probably does not matter. As currently produced, it is a good modern play.

No doubt Ariel never has completely satisfied everyone. Miss Zorina is graceful in posture and motion but she is a little ponderous in speech and her voice is not designed for Ariel's songs. Mr. Lee, in costume, is a dangerous appearing Caliban; he has the air of a snarling dog, but he also at times is a little indistinct. He is a Caliban built to invite shudders, and in that he succeeds; some of the lines, however, are lost. It is possible that Miss Zorina's characterization is not as spiritlike as it might be, and Mr. Lee's a little too roaring; likely it does not matter, since Ariel and Caliban always have faced charges.

As Prospero, however, Arnold Moss is superb. He has the dignity of the part, the humor, and for the role he owns the make-up of a gentle Mephisto. He delivers his lines easily and clearly; at the end, when Prospero decides to forgive his enemies, he is winning and human. As Prospero's daughter, Miranda, Frances Heflin also is giving an excellent interpretation. Pretty to begin with, she has a charming manner and a graceful way of speaking. George Voskovec and Jan Werich, Czech comedians, are making their first local appearances as the jester and the butler. They are funny in their drunken scene, though that may be a little long.

Vito Christi is young Ferdinand, playing it not so well as Miss Heflin plays his betrothed; and Paul Leyssac is the elderly and honest Gonzalo. Mr. Leyssac is no amateur either. The setting is a comparatively simple one which moves about on a turntable and so requires no scene changes and subsequent delays; that and the costumes, both good, were designed by Motley. There is incidental music in keeping with the action and spirit of the play, the work of David Diamond. The whole is well put together, well thought out, and on a cold winter's night a real pleasure.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
January 26, 1945

'The Tempest' After 29 Years

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

ALTHOUGH I saw the last Broadway production of *The Tempest*—the tercentenary revival in 1916—I saw it through the eyes of a schoolboy; my impressions are few and vague, and my reaction (which was probably a schoolboy's boredom) has vanished. We can be grateful to Cheryl Crawford and Margaret Webster for reviving it anew in this generation; whatever their stage difficulties and deficiencies, almost all of Shakespeare's plays should be produced, if only occasionally, in their proper medium, the theatre. *The Tempest* is one of the plays that bristle with difficulties and deficiencies; of all Shakespeare's works it is, indeed, perhaps the hardest to project corporeally. Its beguiling side, its air of poetry and enchantment, almost eludes human presentation; while its baser side, its plot twists and comedy scenes, almost exhaust human patience. It is necessarily a challenge to whoever undertakes to put it on the stage.

Margaret Webster has taken up the challenge fearlessly and forthrightly, and contrived a *Tempest* that "plays," that holds together, that has some value as spectacle, that—theatrically speaking—makes sense. Her direction is, indeed, as lucid and ingenious as, on its own terms, you could ask it to be. This is an evening that anybody who cares about Shakespeare will very much want to see, for its particular rewards as well as its general rarity.

* * *

Yet it is an evening that (even granting the difficulties) has its disappointments. What, for instance, is good about the direction springs in a way from what is bad about the conception. The fact, again, that *The Tempest* makes sense counts against as well as for it; for it is quite unimportant that it should make sense; it is only important that it should make poetry. And poetry, or at least enough poetry, this *Tempest* doesn't make. At times it becomes something strange enough; but not, to use its own famous words, something "rich and strange." The chief reasons, I think, are that its cruder elements are too much played up; and that too many members of the cast are not equal to their assignments.

As for the cruder elements, who really cares a farthing about Alonso and Antonio and Sebastian, or even Trinculo and Stephano? Yet the first group are given their full value, and the second group are virtually permitted to hog the stage. As Trinculo and Stephano, the famous Czech comics, George Voskovec and Jan Werich, certainly milk the roles of everything in them. But even they cannot make the roles very rewarding; and their horseplay is not only excessive; it also reduces the Caliban they work upon to a cipher; it also sinks the whole tone of the play to prose. For myself (whether misguidedly or not) I should like a *Tempest* that half-ditched all these dullards, that attempted almost the quality of a ballet, that gave over the stage to magic and romance, and that found, first and foremost, a cast that could properly render Shakespearean verse.

* * *

Doubtless it would be hard to find; by and large it has certainly not been found here. Only Arnold Moss as Prospero and Frances Heflin as Miranda give you what you should have. They, indeed, give it handsomely—Mr. Moss in particular. He looks like the magician and talks like the philosopher and comports himself like the duke he is; he brings to his lines a true sense of Shakespearean verse. He has, above all, a fine authority, and dominates—as of course he should—the play. Miss Heflin, I think, is a real find for Shakespeare. She is as intelligent as her Miranda is innocent; she gets everything out of her lines, and—except for a slight whine in her voice—puts everything that she should into them. When Prospero and Miranda are together, *The Tempest* is what it should be.

But Zorina is not an effective Ariel, or Canada Lee an effective Caliban. Neither part, to be sure, is strictly playable; but Ariel has to be something more than graceful and Caliban something more than grotesque. Each has important speeches to deliver; each has an essential quality to convey. Even as a spirit, Zorina seems too cold; even visually, her motions are too sharp—she uses her arms a little as though she were wigwagging in semaphore. And she is quite inadequate for Shakespeare's verse. Mr. Lee, though he is not up to the verse either, is much more to be sympathized with. His part is hardly allowed any dimension or meaning; and in his biggest scenes he is snowed under by the clowns.

* * *

The production uses a revolving stage that is economical and saves time, but not very atmospheric. David Diamond's incidental music *is* often atmospheric, and generally pleasant. The fourth-act masque is omitted, in order to transpose Prospero's great speech to the end, where it comes off beautifully—the cast fading out and "vanishing into air, into thin air" as Prospero speaks the words. It is the finest moment of the evening.

NEW YORK MOTION PICTURE
CRITICS' REVIEWS
1944 COMPLETE VOLUME
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"A Goose for the Gander"

Comedy by Harold J. Kennedy; staging by Tommy Ward; setting by Frederick Fox; presented by Jules L. Leventhal and Frank McCoy at the Playhouse Tuesday evening, January 23, 1945.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
January 24, 1945

The Sauce Is Missing

By OTIS L. GUERNSEY JR.

GLORIA SWANSON'S Broadway stage debut in the new comedy called "A Goose for a Gander" is something of a theatrical misstep. Her vehicle is a trivial affair about one of those ten-year-old marriages that totters when the wife comes home unexpectedly to find her husband having a Roman holiday in Greenwich. She tries to liven things up by bringing her men friends into the house, but the production is weakened further by poor staging which concentrates on silly visual gags and the striking of attitudes. This combination of forced sophistication and nonsense promises very little in the way of entertainment in evenings to come at the Playhouse.

* * *

The script, which represents Harold J. Kennedy's first Broadway effort as an author, is chiefly at fault in the matter of situation. There are several good laughs in "A Goose for a Gander," but they are planted witticisms rather than fluid high spots. The play simply sets a husband, a wife and a few illicit loves in the same room and directs them to talk among themselves—and that's that. Occasionally some one throws a vase or stumbles over a chair, but very little more comes out of it except the conventional happy ending. The wisecracks are of necessity spread very thinly over the three acts at the Playhouse, and some of the characters become tired of one another. Eventually, the audience begins to share their feelings.

* * *

Miss Swanson misses her comedy timing on occasions as the wife who invites her old beaux to the house in order to have a fling before her husband's eyes; and both she and Conrad Nagel, who as the husband works hard to give the show a boost, suffer from a general uneasiness in these curious proceedings. The set is adequate, allowing the cast to shout up or down at each other from several levels, but the direction has helped out very little—the dialogue, in general, being paced too fast and the action too slowly. On several occasions the actors literally race through their lines to inject pep into the fatuous doings of "A Goose for a Gander." For all their efforts, it remains a dull and awkward comedy.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
January 24, 1945

Gloria Swanson Rides Into Town on Wobbly Vehicle

By BURTON RASCOE

GLORIA SWANSON, of whom many of us males now past our best youth have cherished fond memories of the days when she was the queen of the nickelodeons as a Mack Sennett bathing beauty, made her debut on the New York stage at the Playhouse last night in a very regrettable mistake committed especially for her by Harold J. Kennedy, entitled "A Goose for the Gander."

Miss Swanson, who is a prosperous businesswoman nowadays, should have been better advised in her choice of a starring vehicle for her first appearance on Broadway. For "A Goose for the Gander" is a callow, sophomoric ineptitude of the type which Charles Hanson Towne must have had to reject bales of, back in 1910, as editor of the old Smart Set when that periodical was considered witty and very daring. It is the sort of thing a kid in school in those days might have written under the impression that he was the Arthur Wing Pinero of the future.

The play has to do with a woman's determination to pay her husband back in his own coin when she returns unexpectedly from a trip to find him breakfasting with a strange young female. She persuades the girl to stay on as a house guest and invites three of her own admirers to come as week-end guests to make love to her.

Author-Actor

The author, Mr. Kennedy, acts in his own play and has, perhaps naturally enough, given himself all the lines that are supposed to be witty. As one of Miss Swanson's constant but unrequited adorers Mr. Kennedy observes of the strange antics of David Tyrrell, who has a preposterous role as an athletic type, "Is he clowning or is he supposed to be real?"

That's what I wondered about all the performers in "A Goose for the Gander" for the first 10 minutes; and then I realized they were merely unhappy actors desperately struggling with perhaps the worst script staged on Broadway since "Victory Belles." Conrad Nagle, co-starred with Miss Swanson, played as though he were frustrated by an Equity contract which forbade him from walking out on the play with the stream of other deserters in the audience.

THE CAST

David	Conrad Nagel
Suzy	Maxine Stuart
Lorraine	Choo Choo Johnson
Benson	Joyce Sirola
Tony	Harold J. Kennedy
Katherine	Gloria Swanson
Jonathan	John Clubley
Chauffeur	George Margolis
Wally	David Tyrrell

NEW YORK SUN
January 24, 1945

'A Goose for the Gander,' Latest Playhouse Comedy, Is Flimsy and Silly

By WARD MOREHOUSE

IT'S been the custom lately for screen players to try their luck on the Broadway stage, and now comes Gloria Swanson's turn. But Miss Swanson, as was the case with Mary Astor recently, didn't wait to equip herself with the play before making her New York debut. "A Goose for the Gander," which banged about the stage of the Playhouse last evening, is a dismaying trifle, an error for all concerned.

This one is about Katherine and David and their married life, which has been getting a little stale after ten years. When Katherine returns home unexpectedly from the milk farm, to which she had gone to regain her looks, she finds David, in one of his wayward moments, entertaining Suzy at breakfast. So then she decides to show him what a fling can really be and she invites a trio of her admirers for the week end. Result: All is serene and loving again between devoted wife and penitent husband at 10:55 P.M.

"A Goose for the Gander" is a first play by Harold J. Kennedy, who is in the cast. The dialogue is trite for the greater part of the evening and when it occasionally becomes pretentious and philosophical it is particularly hard to take. And the play isn't helped along by either the acting or the direction.

Gloria Swanson, co-starred with Conrad Nagel, looks well indeed, and wears nice clothes, but she can't do much with the part of Katherine—or for it. She is given to frequent changes of mood in her playing and to considerable posturizing. Conrad Nagel has scant success as David, a badly written role.

Author Kennedy reveals a certain glibness in his handling of the character of Tony. Choo Choo Johnson is the Western Union messenger, wears orchids, and seems to have just dropped in from Copacabana, and is about to hurry back to it.

"A Goose for the Gander," which has also been having its road adventures, is brought into the Playhouse by Jules J. Leventhal and Frank McCoy. It is a flimsy comedy and an incredibly silly one.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
January 24, 1945

Playhouse Offering Stars Gloria Swanson

By ROBERT GARLAND

LAST NIGHT was as good as tops in so far as personal premieres are concerned on the Broadway time table. That is to say, Gloria Swanson managed to make magic on her own at the Playhouse which, even so and in a manner speaking, has not changed its unlucky luck.

The pity is, Gloria doesn't have a play. All she has is a vehicle, a sort of dialogic wheelchair provided by the Harold J. Kennedy who, on odd mornings at Town Hall, talks condescendingly about drama criticism.

To listen to him up on a platform, so wise, so witty, so assured, it is in me to wish that he'd come currently to my rescue and tell me—and you, for that matter—what's so very wrong with his "A Goose for the Gander."

Last night, a better-than-average cast, headed by Miss Swanson and Conrad Nagel, worked its head off in an endeavor to make Mr. Kennedy's lines come up to the level of Mr. Kennedy's lectures. But, I'm afraid, without any great success.

All of which leads me to believe that Mr. Kennedy, Harold J. Kennedy, talks a better play than the play he writes. As last night is my witness, that's a theatrical disappointment.

Glorious Gloria

The play Mr. Kennedy writes is all about the Katherine that Gloria Swanson is requested to portray, a combination of Beatrice, the Duchess of Windsor and Mae West before she turned Russian on her customers. No on-stage man is NOT in love with her.

So devastating is her charm that husbands put horns on their own heads while she, got up in gowns credited to Valentina and hats blamed quite openly on John Frederics, lays low the lesser male members of the cast.

Playwright Kennedy, the aforesaid Harold J., has written himself the best lines "A Goose for the Gander" has to offer. Although his is not the stellar role, he, as one of Miss Swanson's five extra matrimonial lovers, has the wittiest words in the talkfest up on the spotlighted platform at the Playhouse. The wittiest words and the last word. The David, who is co-star Conrad Nagel, is no more than a stooge for Mr. Kennedy's Tony. Every time Mr. K. sneezes, Mr. N. says "Yes."

That's the plot. And, after trying to get out of the Playhouse, I've clean forgotten how the inaction finally turns out. Maybe being the keenest sort of criticism, it doesn't really matter.

A La Greenwich

The cast does everything in its power to act as if it were acclimated to Greenwich, Conn. Now Greenwich, Conn., is said to be the richest community, per capita, in these United States. Acting up to that takes some doing. Least successful, to begin at the bottom, is the Maxine Stuart who pretends to be a bore called Suzy. Miss Stuart is ahead of herself, having performed in television and, believe it or not, posed in person for the late lamented Charles Dana Gibson.

Starting this time at the top, Gloria Swan-

son, making her Broadway debut, gets everything there is to get out of the play's unheroic Katherine. Easy on both ear and eye, I wish her producers, Jules Leventhal and Frank McCoy, had provided her with a more impressive vehicle.

But they haven't and I'm happy to report that the lovely lady makes much out of little, acting her heart out in a role that calls for small cardical endeavor. Give Gloria a good part and I'll vouch that she will revel in it.

"A Goose for the Gander," as staged by Tommy Ward against a background by Frederick Fox, provides but little glory for the Swanson. It might just as well have stood in bed out in the hinterland.

NEW YORK POST
January 24, 1945

Gloria Swanson—Herself—In 'A Goose for the Gander'

By WILELLA WALDORF

GLORIA SWANSON made her Broadway stage debut at the Playhouse last night in a farce by Harold J. Kennedy entitled "A Goose for the Gander." The program says it was written especially for her. Conrad Nagel is co-starred and the author of the piece is also present most of the evening, getting off his own quips with a calculated charm designed to impress upon the audience that he is a remarkably droll young man, gay, nonchalant and debonair.

The odd part of it is that Mr. Kennedy has a certain flair for comedy that occasionally results in a surprisingly funny, even witty, remark. The farce he has knocked together to show off Miss Swanson's emotional range leaps around so hysterically from one style to another with considerable abandon. She's reliving the old Mack Sennett comedy days, the next recalling "Male and Female" or "Manhandled."

A Bushel of Wisecracks

But it's the quips that really matter to the author. After duly arranging for the star to play a glamorous creature with at least three men making love to her while her husband registers jealousy on the side-lines, he proceeds to let loose enough wisecracks to keep any of the so-called comedy hours on the radio overstocked for years.

Not all of Mr. Kennedy's gems are as funny as he hopes they are, but some of them are comic in their slightly self-conscious way and serve to take the audience's mind off the fact that the play itself is something of a strain.

Miss Swanson herself looks surprisingly young and manages to leap from one mood to another with considerable abandon. She's the lady-of-the-manor, the abused wife, the glamour girl, the gamine, the giddy comedienne, the slap-happy champagne-drinker, the wise-cracking baby doll, one at a time or all at once, depending upon the exigencies of the plot.

The next time she has a play especially written for her she should see that it doesn't try to cover quite so much ground, but no doubt she wanted to have her fling and she comes off better, certainly, than most notables of the silent film days would under the same circumstances, chiefly because she never seems to be taking herself or the show too seriously.

Mr. Nagel, as the husband who tries to philander a bit in a suitably austere fashion, uses the deep organ-tones of his resonant vocal equipment as a sounding board for the quips of the rest, and otherwise contents himself with looking slightly confused, as no doubt he was.

Maxine Stuart, David Tyrrell and John Clubley provided reliable support and a young woman named Choo Choo Johnson turned up once in the first act and again in the third with the surprising news that she was a Western Union Messenger. She was, too.

"A Goose for the Gander" is the dramatic equivalent of what is known in the publishing field as hammock reading. It has no literary distinction whatever, but it may give you a giggle now and then and help you to relax, or even doze off and on. Take along a box of nice, gooey candy (if you can find any) and rattle the paper.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
January 24, 1945

The Playhouse Is at It Again

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

THE Playhouse seems to have itself confused with those hotels that limit a guest's stay to five days. A staggering number of shows have perished there in infancy this season, and I fear that *A Goose for the Gander* will enjoy no more spacious a life. Certainly it doesn't deserve to. Those veterans of Hollywood, Gloria Swanson and Conrad Nagel, have been pitched into a comedy with an ancient plot and been left stranded among the author's desperate and unceasing witticisms. Anything but fun to begin with, *A Goose* winds up in a tie with most of the season's worst bores.

The play—just in case any one should find the title too obscure—is about a wife who comes home unexpectedly to find a pretty little baggage in the house, and who thereupon decides. . . . Only in this case she needs three men to provide her with sauce. However, nothing much happens; the play just flies unavailingly back and forth between something like drawing-room comedy and something like bath-house farce. The author himself plays one of the wife's young men, and comes in for the lion's share of the bountiful repartee. He occasionally gets off something fairly good, but each tolerable mot is followed by a dozen dreadful ones. The writing of *A Goose* is everywhere as forced as the action is foolish.

* * *

Miss Swanson has her moments of comedy, but spoils them by going dramatic or reverting to movie technique. Mr. Nagel is cabined inside a dull straight role, and never gets out. Maxine Stuart is a pert enough minx, and Choo Choo Johnson a good-looking irrelevancy. There are also some good-looking clothes and a good-looking set. Too bad nobody thought of a play.

NEW YORK TIMES
January 24, 1945

Dead Duck

By LEWIS NICHOLS

AS though the Playhouse were engaged in some macabre form of repertory, they opened up another one of these things last evening. This one was called "A Goose for the Gander," and in it Harold J. Kennedy picked up and shook out the whole question of marital infidelity. By 10:55 that question had been left about as it was, the theatre had taken its usual step down, certain depressed souls had bounded into the suddenly cool night and Gloria Swanson had completed a not-too-significant debut on the Broadway stage. Enough for one evening, it might be said? Too much for one evening.

Obviously Mr. Kennedy has been studying the works of Noel Coward, and he has written a play which probably seemed pretty funny in the middle of the last night he worked on it. A woman comes home suddenly and finds her husband with another; she decides that if he can do it, she can do it. Being thorough, she invites a banker, a tarzan and—since Mr. Kennedy plays the part call it a Noel Coward role—to supplement her husband. After some of the guests have gone in swimming with their clothes on, others have drunk too much champagne and brandy and all have talked far too much, she decides she loves the head of the house after all. His trade, by the way, is OWI, not, as someone on the stage remarked during an early exchange of lines, AWOL.

Being the author, with all the privileges of royalty, Mr. Kennedy has written himself the best part. A few of his phrases indeed are not bad, but they are like a drop against all the water in the household's violently agitated swimming pool. Miss Swanson is a victim of the circumstances that her role is silly, and last evening she seemed to be in a couple of moods about how to play it. Conrad Nagel's situation is downright desperate; the husband in these infidelity sideswipes never has a happy time, and Mr. Nagel's is dreary. David Tyrrell is the tarzan, John Clubley the banker and Maxine Stuart the other girl. With his eye on something, possibly the West Coast, Mr. Kennedy let it be known at the end the husband hadn't been unfaithful after all. That completed it; no one had any fun.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
January 24, 1945

Gloria Swanson's 'A Goose for the Gander' Not Saucy—Applesaucy

By JOHN CHAPMAN

IT seems to have become a habit of film folk to come and make a try, fling or pass at Broadway. Latest entrant is Gloria Swanson, who appeared last night at the Playhouse in "A Goose for the Gander."

Miss Swanson unhappily is not one of the current artists of the cinema. Her triumphs date back a bit—but she is, nevertheless, pure Hollywood, and this play is her first stage affair.

Before getting into the bad news about the play, I should like to report that Miss Swanson, in addition to being handsome and well-clad, has a good idea of what stage acting could be like. She has change of pace and an unexpected flexibility of voice, and, I think, a sense of humor.

"A Goose for the Gander," however, has little sense of humor. Three or four of the lines are pretty good, as when Harold J. Kennedy explains how he happened to have a job in Northampton, Mass., by saying he was working a friend through college.

A Mild Sex Comedy

Mr. Kennedy, who is the author as well as an actor, has doped up a mild sex comedy about a quarreling wife and husband. Conrad Nagel plays the husband and Miss Swanson, of course, the wife. When Gloria discovers that Conrad has slipped on a tomato she decides that a woman can play the game game. She calls in, for purposes of dialogue more than dalliance, three men—an athletic type, a sympathetic type and a dull but generous type.

But nothing much ever happens and it is quite a strain helping the play along from scene to scene. Playwrights should be taught that audiences hate to work.

I was glad, of course, to see Miss Swanson in person. I was only slightly less overcome, or more undercome at viewing in person one Choo Choo Johnson, without whose name no Broadway column can be written. She turned up twice in the role of a Western Union messenger but in the habiliments of a cover girl on her way to keep a date with twelve photographers from *Life*. She didn't choo even once.

Have You Donated YOUR Share of Blood ?

"Rebecca"

Play by Daphne Due Maurier; staging by Clarence Derwent; settings designed by Watson Barratt; assisting producer, Gilda Dahlberg; presented by Victor Payne-Jennings at the Ethel Barrymore Theater Thursday evening, January 18, 1945.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
January 19, 1945

'Rebecca'—Book, Movie —Now Becomes a Play

By BURTON RASCOE

DAPHNE DU MAURIER'S "Rebecca," which opened at the Ethel Barrymore last night, is now a brilliant stage triumph—another addition to the first-rate plays of a rich season—after having been a distinguished and best-selling novel (a Literary Guild selection) and one of the most notable films in recent years.

You are hereby warned to get in your ticket order for "Rebecca" early if you don't want to wait a long time to see it and gripe about the difficulty of getting seats for the outstanding Broadway shows. For, make no doubt about it, "Rebecca" is a resounding hit. And it is the first hit in its class—that of a psychological murder thriller—among many failures, since "Angel Street" opened on Dec. 6, 1941, for a run of three years.

This stage triumph of "Rebecca" is primarily a production triumph, and so first tribute must go to Victor Payne-Jennings before we go any further; for the story is by now so well known (through the movie and the many reprints of the novel) that the task of the producer was to make the play so nearly perfect in every respect that people would want to see this mystery thriller even if they were already familiar with every detail of the story.

Good Writing Job

Of course, to begin with, Miss Du Maurier had had to produce a satisfactory adaptation of her novel to the stage. But that mustn't have been any too tough a trick for the writing granddaughter of the author of "Trilby" and "Peter Ibbetson" and the daughter of the great English actor-producer, Gerald Du Maurier. She knew the tricks. She knew she would have to compress, condense. She couldn't begin the play at Monte Carlo, as in the novel, have it wander to Venice, Paris, London, Cornwall, all over Manderley Hall and the De Winter estate, to the boat house, to the coroner's inquest and to the mysterious doctor's flat in Bloomsbury. She had to confine her action to a few crucial days at Manderley and, preferably, to one room therein.

That meant she had to dispense with the very thing which had made her novel a terrific tour de force—the long buildup of Rebecca, almost to the very end of the novel, as having been such an unutterably beautiful and gracious person before her death that the second Mrs. De Winter — an orphaned working girl before her marriage—was hopelessly and tragically beaten in her efforts to compete with the memory of such a glamorous creature. Those who read the novel when it first came out will remember the thrilled shock of surprise at the denouement— and recall their admiration for the exceedingly adroit way in which Miss Du Maurier had misled them all along. . . . I shall not disclose how Miss Du Maurier has switched the dramatic interest of the story in her play and yet has preserved the essentials of her thrill technique, but I'll say she has done it with immensely clever craftsmanship.

Directing Masterpiece

But the play (when nearly everybody knows the story) had ultimately to depend upon the director, the cast and the atmosphere created by the set—upon the production as a whole. Clarence Derwent has been given a superb cast to work with, but he has achieved a masterpiece of directing with this play. He has taken the hitherto rather awkward and inexpert Diana Barrymore and made her give a finished and moving performance as the second Mrs. De Winter. He has given full scope to the brilliant and subtle technique of that accomplished actress, Florence Reed, as the sinister housekeeper in a characterization quite different from, but quite as powerful as, Judith Anderson's in the movie. He has made every player natural, believable and interesting, from Bramwell Fletcher, a principal, to Edgar Kent, in one brief bit, with high spots achieved by George Baxter and Reginald Mason in between in minor parts.

Watson Barratt's conception of a living room in a wing of Manderley is a final touch of excellence to this very meritorious production. All honor to Victor Payne-Jennings' "Rebecca"!

THE CAST

Frith	Richard Temple
Beatrice Lacy	Margaret Bannerman
Major Giles Lacy	Franklyn Fox
Frank Crawley	Claude Horton
Maxim de Winter	Bramwell Fletcher
Mrs. de Winter	Diana Barrymore
Maid	Jacqueline Max
Robert	Kenneth Treseder
Mrs. Danvers	Florence Reed
Jack Favell	George Baxter
Col. Julyan	Reginald Mason
William Tabb	Edgar Kent

NEW YORK SUN
January 19, 1945

'Rebecca,' Offered at Barrymore, Straggles, Lacks Sustained Excitement

By WARD MOREHOUSE

"REBECCA," another play that has been shuttling from city to city in extensive and successful road travel, has now reached Broadway and today's report is that this new melodrama is only fair. Brought to town by Victor Payne-Jennings, it was given its first performance last evening at the Belasco.

Daphne du Maurier's story was familiar to many of those who assembled for the premiere in 47th street. As a novel it was a best seller. As a film it had screen importance. And now along comes "Rebecca" as a play, submitted to New York after nearly 250 performances on tour. All that road work didn't correct its faults.

"Rebecca," in stage form, is spotty and straggling. It has moments of creepy suspense, but it is generally irresolute and diffuse. The early portions of the play create a mood and there are some eerie interludes, brought on chiefly by the playing of Florence Reed as the white-faced, slithering and vengeful housekeeper, but the excitement is never sustained and "Rebecca" is very weak at its finish.

Here, compressed into three acts, is Daphne du Maurier's tale of the spell exerted by the dead wife of Maxim de Winter over the ghostly Hall of Manderley and those who come within its brooding walls; of the menace that Rebecca's memory possesses for the young bride who has been brought to the Cornwall estate as De Winter's second wife. A tale, too, of his confession to this devoted girl of the loathing that he and Rebecca had for each other, of his murdering her, and of the eventual finding of the body. In the final act of the play a motive is established for suicide, the coroner's verdict is accepted, De Winter's secret is known only to his bride, and the spell of Rebecca is finally broken.

The best scenes of "Rebecca" are those early ones dominated by Florence Reed as Mrs. Manders, the demoniacal housekeeper. In her first-act slow descent of the broad stairway she is one of the most terrifying figures who has come to Broadway in quite a while; she brings to her characterization much of the menace and fascination that belonged to her creation of Mother Goddam, of the unforgettable past. There is a good and tingling second-act scene in which Bramwell Fletcher tells of his hatred of Rebecca and of his doing away with her. But in the final act the play falls off badly and its conclusion is rather pat and routine.

Bramwell Fletcher gives a good performance for most of the way. Diana Barrymore is the tremulous bride brought to the bleak Cornwall coast and she is not very impressive. She is convincing in her terror, however, and she is the first Barrymore I have ever seen frightened on any stage. Richard Temple is in the tradition as a butler. Margaret Bannerman brings some life to a minor role. The setting by Watson Barratt conveys the gloom of Cornwall and Manderley.

"Rebecca" does not live up to its road reputation—or to general expectations. It has some tingling moments but it is lacking in sustained suspense. In short, a loose and fumbling play.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
January 19, 1945

'Rebecca' Stars Diana At Ethel Barrymore

By ROBERT GARLAND

DAPHNE DU MAURIER'S "Rebecca" has been made into everything but a ballet.

First a novel, and a good one. Then a movie, and entirely worthy of the book.

And now a play, which Victor Payne-Jennings brought last night into the Ethel Barrymore with Florence Reed, Bramwell Fletcher and Diana Barrymore in the leading roles.

In a workman-like dramatization of her very own, Miss du Maurier's story of the not-so-dear departed mistress of Manderley scores again, adding one more must-see attraction to Broadway's expanding list.

"Rebecca" with round actors is swell. In the handsome production provided by Mr. Payne-Jennings, it has color, movement, suspense and the power to raise the hair.

Small wonder theatre-going citizens of the hinterland have been flocking to it for nigh onto a year. Small wonder last night's initial congregation in 47th st. remained to applaud and cheer, bestowing encore after encore on the play, the players and the production.

Each of these is excellent. Each of these should be in town for many a night and day to come.

Victor Payne-Jennings has made no mistake in producing "Rebecca" as a play after, instead of before, the motion picture version has been shown. To the contrary, I hope he sets a precedent. I'm pretty sure he has.

Hold Your Hair On

The story of "Rebecca" is too familiar to call for details here. If you know it, you know it, and that's all there is about it. If you don't know it, you're the better for it.

So suffice it to say that when Maxim de Winter brings his bride, his second wife, back to Manderley, the spirit of Rebecca, his first wife, has taken over the house and all who dwell therein.

Drowned just off the Cornwall Coast less than a year ago, she'll not stay dead. From her watery grave—like Tit Willow—she dominates the scene.

Dominating the scene, she drives the second Mrs. de Winter almost insane. Everywhere the bride goes, every time the bride moves, she bumps into the projection of the drowned Rebecca. The servants, the neighbors, even the house itself, acknowledge no other Mrs. de Winter. Dead, as alive, Rebecca is mistress of Manderley.

This, of course, leads to complications, complications which entangle Mrs. Danvers, the old Manderley housekeeper, Frith, the old Manderley retainer, and even Maxim de Winter, master of Manderley and Rebecca's not-too-guiltless widower.

This gives you some idea. But, even as it

does so, it no more than hints at a twisting, menacing, ofttimes spine-chilling tale which is at its most twisting, menacing and spine-chilling at the Ethel Barrymore.

Four Times Welcome

Florence Reed, one of the first actresses on the American—or any other—stage, is superb as Mrs. Danvers, the role played in Hollywood with equal effectiveness by Judith Anderson.

You have seen Miss Reed in "Yes, My Darling Daughter;" as the Nurse to Katharine Cornell's Juliet; as Madame Goddam in "The Shanghai Gesture;" in "The Skin of Our Teeth," with Tallulah Bankhead, and with Bramwell Fletcher and Laurette Taylor in the recent revival of "Outward Bound." But you've never seen her in finer acting fettle than you'll see at the Ethel Barrymore.

Bramwell Fletcher is restrained, as right as rain, as the Master of Manderley. It's a part that could be woefully overplayed. But Mr. Fletcher never falls into that error. Especially impressive is he in the long scene in the final stanza, where he says no word but acts in pantomime.

Diana Barrymore is better than I have ever seen her as the second Mrs. de Winter. Constantly growing in skill, assurance and on-stage stature, she is the stuff of which Barrymores are made. The supporting cast is what Miss du Maurier, novelist and playwright, ordered . . .

"Rebecca," in this, its third and three-dimensional form, is one of the delights of a delightful season. It brings fresh excitement to the Broadway scene, along with Florence Reed, Diana Barrymore and Bramwell Fletcher. Thus, it is four times welcome.

NEW YORK POST
January 19, 1945

'Rebecca' on the Stage—Not a Motion Picture

By WILELLA WALDORF

IT IS generally considered a very reckless gesture for a theatrical manager to produce a play that has already caused a considerable furore on the screen. Victor Payne-Jennings, however, has gone serenly ahead with his plans for presenting Daphne du Maurier's "Rebecca" on the stage and it has been conspicuously successful on tour despite the film's wide popularity only a few years ago.

Last night Mr. Payne-Jennings brought Miss du Maurier's drama—based, of course, on her novel— to the Barrymore Theatre, with a company as good, in some respects better, than the Hollywood troupe, and there seems to be no good reason why the play should not stay in our midst as long as the somewhat overwrought movie did.

The stately-homes-of-England atmosphere, combined with a murder mystery and plenty of love interest, is just as potent at the Barrymore as it was at the Radio City Music Hall a while back, even though Miss du Maurier's play-writing has a slightly musty odor about it at times and one is occasionally reminded as the devious plot unfolds that the novel upon which it is based was probably a very toney piece of literary trash.

The Unhappy Bride

Although this reviewer saw the celebrated movie during its Broadway run, we were comfortably hazy on the details of the story when the curtain rose last night—just hazy enough to be reasonably interested in the plight of the second Mrs. de Winter, unhappily marooned at Manderley, the de Winter estate in Cornwall, entirely surrounded by reminders of the first Mrs. de Winter, drowned less than a year before.

The first Mrs. de Winter, of course, was the Rebecca of the title, but although her spirit haunts the place she never actually appears, since this is not, thank Heaven, a ghost play. All of the action goes on in one end of the hall at Manderley, which renders the drama somewhat static at times, but the acting generally is good and the directoin by Clarence Derwent as spirited as is consistent with the mannered elegance of British upper class society.

Bramwell Fletcher is well cast as the nerve-wracked Maxim de Winter, lord of the manor, and does excellently by the role except at one point where he is called upon to play a surprisingly tinny piano.

Florence Reed is venemous but restrained as the sinister housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, rendering this faintly preposterous role something more believable than a mere shilling shocker fiend.

Diana Barrymore Good

As the second Mrs. de Winter, Diana Barrymore gives a performance that is no disgrace to the noble stage name she bears. Miss Barrymore has developed considerably as an actress since last we saw her, and while she suffers somewhat from the static quality of the play in the later scenes, and is not always at ease standing around in stained-glass attitudes registering shock while other people pour out their souls in anguish, her performance is intelligent and often very touching.

Margaret Bannerman gives poise and distinction to the role of de Winter's sister, more important in the play than it was in the film, and there is competent support from Claude Horton, Franklyn Fox, George Baxter and Reginald Mason.

Watson Barratt's single set is sufficiently opulent to persuade anybody but a confirmed movie-goer that it is part of an English manor house. Those whom Hollywood has taught to expect a combination of Buckingham Palace and Warwick Castle, full of "ancestral armour and old brasses," will be horribly disappointed.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
January 19, 1945

'Rebecca' Comes to a Bad End

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

WITH *Rebecca*—whether as play, novel or movie—neither the critic nor the playgoer has much of a problem. The thing is melodrama, thrill-mongering, hokum; and the only question is how good or bad it is of its kind.

I didn't see the movie; but the novel, for what it was, I found good. The play I didn't find good. It seemed to me hardly ever exciting or tense, and very indifferently produced. To be sure, if you know the story before the curtain ever rises you are not in the best position to judge the play; for, being a melodrama, a tale in which suspense and surprise are what really matters, *Rebecca* can only pay full dividends once. But enacted in a new medium with real skill, I think it could still hold and even grip you. At any rate, at the Ethel Barrymore Thursday night it was a lack of sufficient skill I felt, rather than a lack of sufficient drama. And in any case, my foreknowledge of the story scarcely set me apart; certainly more theater-goers than not will have also read the book or seen the film.

* * *

For the benefit of those who have done neither, *Rebecca* tells of a young girl who becomes the second wife of Maxim de Winter, who owns a great Cornish estate called Manderley. All too soon she finds that the shadow of Rebecca, his drowned first wife, hangs over the place; seems to occupy all his thoughts; dominates the unfriendly, sinister housekeeper. But midway through the play, the melodrama—which had been atmospheric—becomes actual; to say more than that *Rebecca* turns into a murder thriller would not be fair.

But the thrills, both atmospheric and actual, that pervaded the book dwindle into mere emotional pinpricks on the stage. Neither the haunting presence of Rebecca nor the grandly depressing air of Manderley makes itself felt. The whole exciting second part of the story, with its drive and suspense, its uneasy turns and twists, is merely turned into a fairly interesting last act. And that last act is really all that is interesting in the play. Too much of it is weakly paced; too much of it bogs down in long expository speeches; too often the curtain just slumps down on a scene, conveying no sharp sense of climax. The action does not mount; it merely accumulates. And the cast cannot achieve that vibrancy which is essential to good melodrama. As the young wife, Diana Barrymore is, to be sure, often left stranded on the stage; but except for seeming properly unsophisticated and ill-at-ease at the start, she can't get into the role. Bramwell Fletcher, as de Winter, performs competently enough, but lacks authority. As the menacing, black-clothed housekeeper, Florence Reed, stylizing her performance, does get some of the right melodramatic force into her part; but she cannot raise it to the point where it becomes really commanding, and so gradually lowers it to the point where it becomes faintly comic. The smaller roles are handled, adequately enough, by Margaret Bannerman, Franklyn Fox, Claude Horton, George Baxter and Reginald Mason.

But the whole production seems quite spiritless; and Watson Barratt's set seems to me quite ugly—an affront to Rebecca's well-known fastidious taste.

NEW YORK TIMES
January 19, 1945

"Rebecca"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

AFTER numerous and profitable adventures on the road, Daphne du Maurier's adaptation of her own "Rebecca" reached the Ethel Barrymore last evening. To come on to New York showed the real courage of the de Winters, for the play must buck against the reputation of a widely read book and one of Mr. Hitchcock's better movies. Comparisons will be inevitable, and the production offered by Victor Payne-Jennings will not win them; the stage version of "Rebecca" is not equipped for the battle.

There are a number of things wrong with the play, the most depressing being that it is tedious. It has only one or two moments of suspense or potential excitement; and the rest is mainly talk. The young bride, who in the book had no name but here is known as Mrs. de Winter, is lifeless; no one can feel pity for her, or sympathy. The character of Mrs. Danvers is malignant enough, but it is a malignancy stated by the author and not allowed to be built up naturally. The Hall at Manderley has become a rather pretty drawing room in which a group of people sit around waiting for something to happen; and they and their friends on the other side of the lights are somewhat cheated.

The acting is not of the sort to disguise the disquieting fact that the drama is a static one. Making her first entrance as Mrs. Danvers, Florence Reed gives promise that she may create a truly terrifying figure. This does not last, however, and as she goes up and down the stairs, Mrs. Danvers becomes less like a vixen and more like a housekeeper in Scarsdale. As Mrs. de Winter, there is Diana Barrymore, making an appearance in a theatre named for one of the family and considerably troubled by the fact her part isn't a good one. Like Miss Reed, Miss Barrymore is nice at the beginning, but when Miss du Maurier tosses the role aside to concentrate on something else, she must just stand, looking on helplessly.

* * *

Bramwell Fletcher is Maxim de Winter, and, apart from occasional moments, he plays it quietly and easily. As Major Lacy and his lady, Franklyn Fox and Margaret Bannerman provide what comedy there is to "Rebecca"; and Claude Horton is the normal, amiable overseer of Manderley. In the play, Jack Favell—Rebecca's cousin and lover—bears a resemblance to the villain of old-time melodrama, and George Baxter does it accordingly. Reginald Mason gives a neat little portrait of the constable, and Clarence Derwent, in directing, has tried to breathe as much life into the proceedings as he can. It is possible the stage simply is too narrow for "Rebecca"; the current production, at least, does not prove otherwise.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
January 19, 1945

'Rebecca' Not as Good As a Play As It Was As A Book or a Movie

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"REBECCA" on the stage is not as good as it was on paper or on celluloid. It is an admirable effort in which author, producer, director and actors give their best and do not cheat, but the handicap it faces is too great.

The handicap is the stage, which is a simple but fearsome medium. The stage is like a magician; it can play tricks and literally get away with murder—but in order to do so it must never let the audience know that it has anything up its sleeve. Once the gimmick falls out upon the floor the illusion is lost.

Daphne du Maurier's own dramatization of her novel begins excellently and is well played at the Barrymore Theatre. It establishes, quickly and surely, an atmosphere of suppressed tension and mystery. Max de Winter's new wife comes home to Manderley Hall and is properly oppressed by the house staff and by the lurking memory of the first Mrs. de Winter.

Getting to the Point

Then, well along in the second act, it becomes necessary for all this lead-up to be brought to a point. In a one-pound novel an author has all the time and space he needs to get to this point. In a movie the camera can ignore space and condense time. But on the stage one must sooner or later lay everything on the line—and it is fatal just to dump it there and leave it lie.

Well along in the second act of "Rebecca" it becomes necessary for Max to tell his bride that he killed his first wife, and how, and why. It becomes necessary at the same time for his bride and the audience as well to understand him, sympathize with him and forgive him. This can be done on paper and it can be done in film—but it wasn't done on the stage last night and I don't think it can be, because time is too short.

When Bramwell Fletcher tells Diana Barrymore how and why he murdered the first Mrs. de Winter the suspense of the drama vanishes because it takes so long in the telling. After that, everything is anticlimactic. The investigation, the inquest, the deviltry of the too-sketchily portrayed lover . . . these things become a rather tiresome mopping-up of details instead of a properly suspenseful carrying-on of the story.

Miss Barrymore Assured

Miss Barrymore, as the second Mrs. de Winter, plays assuredly but modestly the role of a bride in a haunted house. Mr. Fletcher, as her husband, is capable of all situations up to the time his playwright saddles him with the long confession scene. This he misses, but I think it is more Miss du Maurier's fault than his.

The one person who dominates the stage every moment she is on it is Florence Reed, as Mrs. Danvers, the housekeeper. She does so in admirably simple way—by being very still, by speaking quietly and by looking malevolent. However, the Mrs. Danvers of the stage doesn't have the room or the time she had in the movies. She doesn't set fire to Manderley Hall; in fact, she sort of peters out.

Victor Payne-Jennings has given "Rebecca" an impeccable production, with a set by Watson Barratt whose atmosphere is just right and with direction by Clarence Derwent. But it is easier to make a movie out of a book than it is to make a play.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
January 19, 1945

Fumble

By OTIS L. GUERNSEY JR.

THE attempt to stretch Daphne du Maurier's "Rebecca" into a third medium has fallen short of success. As a novel and in motion picture form this tale of hatred and murder in the English country home called Manderley was a very mountain of terror. But "Rebecca" hasn't made good on its bid to become a triple threat. A group of valiant actors give creditable performances before an excellent setting at the Ethel Barrymore. More's the pity that they must struggle with a very poor playscript which has retained only a suggestion of "Rebecca's" tantalizing suspense.

• • •

In translating her work from the novel to the stage, Miss du Maurier has neglected to build up her most important character: Rebecca, the dead wife of Maxim de Winter, whose personality lives on in the house and makes puppets of those who survive her. Her presence is not really felt in the stage version, and so one is never convinced before the denouement that Maxim really loved Rebecca, a condition which is essential to the mystery. The core of the piece should be the second wife's fear of her rival's living hatred. With Rebecca only a shadow in the play, this fear has no impact; instead the whole thing becomes a simple domestic misunderstanding, developing into a whodunit.

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The sinister figure in the drama is Mrs. Danvers, the housekeeper whose fanatical devotion to the dead Rebecca is supposed to drive the second Mrs. de Winter wild. Florence Reed plays the role with as much harshness as the script allows, and it isn't her fault if Mrs. Danvers is sometimes a little bit laughable at the Ethel Barrymore. She cannot be a hellion in a part whose lines are mostly a repetition that this or that object belonged to the dead wife. The second Mrs. de Winter never gives her a come-uppance; she isn't menacing enough to be worth it.

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When the play takes hold, it is usually by sheer will power on the part of the actors. Bramwell Fletcher plays a moody Maxim de Winter, and he makes an excellent job of the climax in which he tells his wife how he really felt about Rebecca. Diana Barrymore is an adequately shy and shrinking Mrs. de Winter, playing the role with a perfect understanding of its requirements. Neither Mr. Fletcher nor Miss Barrymore have been well directed in their parts by Clarence Derwent, but both are able to rise above the faults of the production and occasionally to bring it up with them. Even so, a "Rebecca" without a stark Mrs. Danvers or a vivid ghostly presence is a very lukewarm "Rebecca" indeed.

"Good Night Ladies"

Farce by Cyrus Wood, based on "Ladies Night," farce by Avery Hopwood and Charlton Andrews; staging by Edward Clarke Lilley; settings by Frederick Fox; costumes by Billy Livingston; presented by Howard Lang and Al Rosen at the Royale Theater Wednesday, January 17, 1945.

NEW YORK SUN
January 18, 1945

'Good Night Ladies' Rumpus in Three Acts and Very Exhausting, Indeed

By WARD MOREHOUSE

"GOOD NIGHT LADIES," the farce that displayed a coyness and an understandable reluctance about coming to within earshot of Broadway during all its months of road wanderings, finally dropped in on the City of New York last night and landed—with a dull thud, I thought—upon the stage of the Royale.

It's a rumpus in three acts, this reconditioned farce—a brazen, banal and exhausting piece on which its producers, Howard Lang and Al Rosen, have spent real money to provide it with a good production for its invasion of the East. If the Royale's farce pays off, then just anything will go.

"Good Night Ladies" was known as "Ladies Night" when Al Woods produced it a quarter of a century ago. In 1942 the new version by Cyrus Woods opened on the Coast, moved cautiously eastward, paused in Chicago and stayed there, unaccountably enough, for 100 weeks. Now, with several of the original players still around, it comes along for a Broadway stand.

THE CAST

Marie	Rosemary Bertrand
Dodie Tarleton	Randee Sanford
Kittie Bonner	Sunnie O'Dea
Mike Bonner	Skeets Gallagher
Mrs. Theresa Tarleton	Kathryn Givney
Alicia Blake	Marlo Dwyer
Fred Blake	Max Hoffmann Jr.
Prof. John Matthews	James Ellison
Mrs. Blanche O'Brien	Ann Fortney
Anna	Lucille Benson
Vickie	Lisa Kirks
Myrtle Shea	Louise Jarvis
Eva La Bouche	Lana Holmes
Policewoman	Beatrice Newport
Fireman	Wendell Ates

The scene of the second act of "Good Night Ladies" is in a women's Turkish bath, or cosmetarium, into which a woman-shy professor and a friend who is trying to teach him about life have fled after the police raided a ball they were attending. The goings-on in the cosmetarium are considerable. The men put on wigs. Girls scamper about in steam room attire. A woman wanders in and does a strip-tease. The cops arrive and so does the fire department and when they all eventually get out of the place the professor is cured of his phobia—and things are sillier than ever.

Skeets Gallagher, man and boy, has been with this farce these many years and he is an industrious performer, as are James Ellison, who is afraid of girls, and Max Hoffmann Jr., who is afraid of nobody. Sunnie O'Dea, very pretty, plays a young wife with commendable restraint. There are good looks and plenty of bare flesh, exhibited by Randee Sanford, Marlo Dwyer, Lana Holmes and Louise Jarvis. Edward Clarke Lilley did the staging for Chicago and points West and has again done so for New York.

As an enticement for easy-money, Saturday-night customers, "Good Night Ladies" may have possibilities; as a play it is terrible. . . . The drama did not advance last night.

NEW YORK POST
January 18, 1945

'Good Night Ladies' Dull Farce in a Turkish Bath

By WILELLA WALDORF

"GOOD NIGHT LADIES," the farce presented at the Royale last night, is a "new" up-to-date version of that old favorite, "Ladies Night in a Turkish Bath." It concerns an uninhibited advertising man and his pal, a painfully shy college professor, who take refuge among the steam cabinets and reducing machines when the police raid the Beaux Arts Ball next door.

It is hardly necessary to add that the advertising man's wife and mother-in-law are among the ladies taking beautifying treatments, and that the girl the professor loves in his painfully shy way is also present. The two gentlemen are impersonated by Skeets Gallagher and James Ellison, both film comedians, who are called upon for female impersonation, slap-stick humor and a great deal of galloping around in the manner of the old Keystone Komedies.

"Good Night Ladies" has been touring for nearly three years now with great success. It shattered the long-run record in Chicago and although New York sometimes fancies its theatrical taste is loftier than the Loop's, we haven't a doubt the show will stay around Broadway for some time.

The strange thing about all this is that "Good Night Ladies," though constantly harping on sex, is surprisingly dull, trite, sophomoric stuff. It is hardly a novelty to see pretty girls walking around in scanties on the Broadway stage today, and almost any musical comedy can get off better jokes than the Messrs. Gallagher and Ellison are forced to wrestle with—at least in the two acts we stayed for.

"Good Night Ladies," in fact, is an old, feeble farce, dressed in modern clothes and fitted out with a couple of 1945 allusions to fool people who don't get around much into thinking they are seeing something terribly new, spicy and gay. It is designed for aging adolescents—the giddy old boys who never grew up.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
January 18, 1945

'Good Night Ladies' Opens at the Royale

By ROBERT GARLAND

THE corn is ripe at the Royale. Good and ripe, believe me.

For it's there that Howard Lang and Al Rosen have set up "Good Night Ladies," their streamlined version of the Avery Hopwood-Charlton Andrews "Ladies' Night in a Turkish Bath," originally produced by Al H. Woods at the Eltinge Theatre with a cast in which were Adele Rowland, Claiborne Foster, John Cumberland and Charles Ruggles in leading roles. The year was 1920. The month was August. The piece was a knockout.

Now a quarter of a century later and three blocks further north, history may well repeat itself, as history is prone to do.

Last night, in 45th st., a happy congregation laughed itself dizzy as the same old corny plot unfolded, brought slightly up to date by the addition of one gag about the cigaret shortage and another gag about Eleanor Roosevelt.

The rest remains an Al Woods-Avery Hopwood farce, circa 1920. The folks out front ate up the corn. They loved it.

With my own eyes, I saw three drama critics laughing. Ten to one, I bet they'll not admit it in their reviews.

Professor Prude

John Matthews is a bashful man. Women are poison to him. The more clothing they remove, the more poisonous they become. So he concentrates on insects, especially spiders. These he knows, understands and loves.

So well does he know, understand and love them that he adopts them as a career, teaching about their comings and their goings in a smart young ladies' school. With spiders he is perfectly at home. But, in the female filled apartment of the Michael Bonners, he is something else again.

So some gentlemen who are decidedly less sex-conscious than he, decide to take him to a Beaux Arts Ball, while the ladies take themselves to a Turkish bath—beg pardon, cosmetarium—which happens to be next door.

The Beaux Arts Ball is raided. The gentlemen make their getaway into the adjoining bathhouse. There, sex raises its attractive head and a good double (and single, for that matter) entendreian time is had by all, including the prudish professor who has seen the error of his ways.

There, slightly on the side, love comes of age. Girl meets boy, girl wins boy, girl keeps boy. Boy is Professor Prude.

It's Up to You

In "Good Night Ladies" all this, and no little more, is acted out openly and aboveboard. It's always sex o'clock at the Royale, just as it was when Mae West and her "Catherine Was Great" were there before it. There's something disarming about the piece's honesty of purpose, its one-track-mindedness, its discovery, at so late a date, that biology can be fun. Call it self-conscious. Call it contrived. Call it corn. Okay! But the pay-as-you-enter playgoer also calls it funny.

The Messrs. Lang and Rosen have given their retitled revival a first-rate production. The cast, headed by Skeets Gallagher and James Ellison, is excellent. The women are, for the most part, lovely. The backgrounds by Frederick Fox are handsome. The costumes by Billy Livingston are smart.

The direction by Edward Clarke Lilly is well-paced. Even the liquor, provided by Park and Tilford, gurgles like the McCoy. Nothing has been spared to make "Good Night Ladies" both dirty and distinguished . . .

Along with Ed Wynn, lox, France, "Don't Fence Me In" and vodka, you either like "Good Night Ladies" or you don't. Most people will like it, I fear.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
January 18, 1945

Chicago's Loss Is Our Loss

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

IF New York cares to demonstrate, in the most decisive way possible, its superiority to Chicago, the chance is now at hand. For at the Royale on Wednesday night there was unveiled—or perhaps the proper word is undressed—*Good Night Ladies* by Cyrus Wood. This is the work that had the Windy City in thrall for one hundred weeks, the work that shattered all records for a run in the thriving State of Illinois. Now it's New York's ball; and if New York cares to demonstrate, etc. etc., I suggest it boot it, hard as it can, right back in the direction of Chicago.

I don't know just how to capture the flavor of this extraordinary exhibit, this belated re-write of *Ladies Night in a Turkish Bath*. It cannot be paraphrased; it cannot even be parodied. The wonder is that it got written; that is, that the man who wrote it knew *how* to write. Yet the play somehow doesn't call for harsh words: stupidly smutty and bewilderingly inept though it is, it is such puerile, such downright moronic farce, that one would withhold the dagger and merely proffer the dunce-cap. The whole thing leaves one speechless, but not with indignation; merely with incredulity.

* * *

As much as *Good Night Ladies* is about anything, it's about a professor who—because at 13 he saw a female spider devour her mate—has a phobia about women, particularly when their flesh is showing. He is cured, and rendered fit for the altar, after being tossed into a Cosmetarium (let's call it a woman's gym) and exposed to the female form in various stages of negligee.

That's just for a sample. Actually there are large numbers of people involved, both stag and in couples; all rushing in and out of doors, dresses and double-entendres; all turning up after the fiesta in the Cosmetarium for as gummed-up a last act as ever kept a farce running from 10:30 till 11. All this to the tune of such dialogue—to use a clean example—as:

She: I'm afraid I'm just old-fashioned.

He: Yes, just one old-fashioned after another.

As you may have gathered, *Good Night Ladies* is not altogether deficient in cheesecake. But it is certainly getting your cheesecake the hard way.

* * *

The Professor in these proceedings is James Ellison; his friend and former scout master is Skeets Gallagher, and among the ladies are Sunnie O'Dea, Randee Sanford, Marlo Dwyer, Lana Holmes and Kathryn Givney. All quite up to their assignments.

NEW YORK TIMES
January 18, 1945

Good Night!

By LEWIS NICHOLS

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, all haggard travelers back from Chicago reported a weird phenomenon out there, "Good Night Ladies." It was a play so bad, they said, that it was packing the house, and indeed it did for 100 weeks, thus becoming a sort of Windy City "Life With Father." Western intellectuals wrote to the newspapers about it as the show went on and on, and civic-minded citizens muttered darkly. It was inevitable, of course, that "Good Night Ladies" finally would reach New York, and this misfortune took place last evening at the Royale. Half of a continent separates Chicago and Broadway, but not on this: the play is just as bad as they said it was.

* * *

Cyrus Wood derived the play from "Ladies' Night," an old-timer by Avery Hopwood and Charlton Andrews. It concerns a college professor who is long on inhibitions about women, and to cure same he goes to an artists' ball. Those are notorious things, and, in flight from the inevitable police, he takes refuge in a distaff turkish bath. Mr. Wood has missed no possibilities. Item: Professor puts on woman's wig and talks falsetto. Item: Woman in steam rom is seen through glass door, and not darkly. Item: Professor's girl, his pal's wife et al are in turkish bath. Item: Strip-tease artiste comes to joint and strip-teases. Item (from dialogue): "I'm afraid I'm just old-fashioned. Yes, one old-fashioned after another."

If the play has any great virtue, it is a back-handed one; it creates a morbid fascination about what can happen next. The words are so corny they might well have come from another world—and this is not an attack on Chicago. The situations all are played with emphasis on the fact that ladies in Turkish baths wear play suits or something, or nothing. Aristotle probably had a thought on that somewhere. A good deal of "Good Night Ladies" is roughly what they used to be doing in burlesque, when New York still retained that art form. Only then they gave you an orchestra and Gypsy Rose Lee.

Skeets Gallagher and James Ellison are the mainstays of all this, and it can be said for the former that he goes at it as quietly as possible. He is the friend, Mr. Ellison is the professor, and the latter apparently just doesn't care what he does. The feminine members of the cast obviously were chosen first for size and shape and second for acting ability, and they are the right size and shape. Edward Clarke Lilley directed, and with the knowledge that this sort of thing must be played as fast as actors can run, he has them jumping in and from windows and tearing around like Man o' War. There can be no doubt of it, "Good Night Ladies" is just as bad now as it was all those years ago and back in Illinois.